War, Changing Patterns of Warfare, State Collapse, and Transnational Violence in Afghanistan: 1978–2001

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Abstract

The war in Afghanistan was one of the most brutal and long lasting conflicts of the second half of the twentieth century. Anthropologists specializing in Afghanistan who wrote about the war at the time reiterated the United State's Cold War rhetoric rather than provide objective analyses. Others ignored the war altogether. What happened in Afghanistan, and why, and the need for objective reassessments only came to mind after the September 11th attacks. This paper examines the genesis and various permutations of the Afghan war in terms of causal dynamics embedded in the broader interstate relations of the world system and its competing military complexes during the second half of the twentieth century and changes in that system in the post-Cold War period.

Introduction: Afghanistan, Cold War Anthropology, and the Anthropology of War

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 to bolster a floundering Marxist regime sparked off one of the most violent and long-lasting wars of the second half of the twentieth century. Referred to in Western sources as the "Afghan *jihad*," the war resulted in one-and-a-half to two million fatalities and the displacement of millions of people as refugees (Sivard 1993; Bercovitch and Jackson 1997; Smith et al. 1997; Kohn 1999). The war also had devastating sociopolitical and economic effects on the country. In the course of a mere twenty five years, Afghanistan was transformed from a once peaceful society (Maley 2002a:6; Olesen 1995: 172) into what Western writers at the end of the twentieth century described as a gruesome "Kalashnikov culture," the abode of heavily armed atavistic militants, "warlords," "opium czars," and "terrorists," a place where women were oppressed

and publicly beaten and where "Islam had gone crazy" (Vogelsang 2002: ix).

Anthropologists writing about the war in the late 1970s and 1980s failed to provide objective assessments. Instead many echoed Washington's Cold War rhetoric that denounced the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as an act of imperialistic aggression, a first step toward global domination, and ridiculed the Afghan Marxists as Soviet "puppets" who had ventured into "blunderland" (Dupree 1979). In the eyes of these anthropologists, the Marxists' efforts to modernize the country became "Stalinization," their attempts to liberate and educate Afghan women "merely political meetings in disguise," and their feminist program "directional indoctrination," "manipulation in the name of reform," another form of exploitation (N. Dupree 1984: 321, 339), misguided, and doomed to failure (Tapper 1984: 305). Professing their unqualified support for the anti-government forces, some anthropologists went as far as to make recommendations as to what type of weaponry should be sent to the rebels in order to defeat the blundering communists: "They obviously need surface-to-air shoulder fired missiles" (Dupree 1984: 72), referring to U.S. Stinger missiles.

For anthropologists to take what Laura Nader (1997) calls the "complicitous" role of "activist Cold Warriors" was a great disservice to the people they were studying and to the discipline itself. This is because, as Gross and Plattner (2002) have cogently pointed out, as outsiders in a conflict situation the anthropologist does not have the experience, expertise, insight, or wisdom to select the "correct" faction to support, "much less the right to become an advocate" in such complex situations (see Sidky 2003: 345–346, 380–382).

In retrospect it is evident that the Afghan Marxists were as much foreign-inspired/local products as the rebels, or *mujahideen* ["those who wage *jihad*"], who drew their impetus from international Islamist ideology equally foreign in the Afghan context, but who received the backing of the United States and its allies, and were hence cast in the dubious categories of "freedom fighters" and "holy warriors" by the Western media and politicians. However one looks at it, many of these "freedom fighters," who Ronald Regan declared to be "the moral equivalent of our own Founding Fathers" (Lohbeck 1993: 161), were as guilty of patent acts of terrorism and crimes against humanity as the Marxists they were armed to overthrow.

The biased view of the Afghan war on the part of anthropologists went beyond mere ethnocentrism (Embree 1950) and reflects what Sampson and Kideckel (1989: 163) call "politico-centrism" during

the Cold War period, or the belief in the superiority of the Western political system and automatic suspicion of the Soviets, associated with a "culture of suspicion" and a "verdict mentality." This attitude greatly hindered assessments of the Afghan war and a grasp of the true nature and causes of the conflict. Only after the September 11th attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. did the need for objective reassessments come to mind (cf., Shahrani 2002: 715).

The Afghan war drew surprisingly little attention from researchers interested in the "the anthropology of war." Much of the anthropology of war literature produced during the 1990s and before focuses on the origins and role of warfare in pre-state societies, the impact of war on sociocultural evolution, the effects of expansionist colonial states on indigenous warfare, and the local causal dynamics of pre-state warfare (see Ferguson 1984; Ferguson and Whitehead 1992; Hass 1992; Reyna and Downs 1994; Otterbein 1994; Keeley 1996; Fried et al. 1968, Blick 1988; Nettleship et al. 1975; Turney-High 1949, for an overview see Simons 1999; Sluka 1992). With a few exceptions (e.g., Leeds 1975; Wolf 1982; Worsley 1984; Turner and Pitt 1989), more effort was expended in developing theories to explain warfare in pre-state societies than in applying the anthropological perspective to modern military conflicts (Simons 1999). The relevance of such research for "large-scale human affairs characteristic of the modern state system" rightly did not go unquestioned (Falk and Lee 1980: 162, 531).

More attention has been given to contemporary warfare in recent years. These works, however, tend to focus upon the local causal dynamics of war in preference to a global systemic approach so as to "contextualize" war and the "meaning" of violence (Richards 2005; Aijmer and Abbink 2000; Schmidt and Schroder 2001; Stewart and Strathern 2002). Analysis from the local perspective is useful in elucidating human agency in making war and peace and clarifying the social dimensions of war and violence with respect to already "embedded patterns of violence" in particular societies (Richards 2005:11). However, approaching the Afghan war in this way totally obscures the central and decisive role played by the interstate system in the patterns of militarization and eventual transformation of the country into a major Cold War battlefield.

While some anthropologists have at least acknowledged the problematic nature of particularistic perspectives in the analytical understanding of contemporary warfare (Ferguson and Whitehead 1992: xiii), others see this as the strength of the discipline. Thus

Bates (1986) in his review of a 1984 edited volume on the Afghan war praised it for being "all the stronger for not dwelling on global questions of causality in peasant revolts." What this perspective overlooks is that the Afghan *jihad* was a "globalised" conflict long before the term "globalization" came into vogue, involving a vast array of foreign proxies, collaborators, mercenaries, spies, provocateurs, military trainers, international arms suppliers, journalists, physicians, and humanitarian aid workers from numerous countries. It is therefore precisely in the "global questions of causality," which have yet to be addressed in all their implications, that a full anthropological comprehension of the Afghan conflict must be sought.

If the avowed objective of the anthropology of war is "gaining some understanding of the causes of organized conflict in order to move toward an explanation of war," as Robarchek (1992: 56) put it, its scope must be extended to contemporary conflicts arising out of the complex global or transnational interactions and alignments that give rise to war and which pose special theoretical problems for the anthropology of war. One such theoretical issue is the emergence of sub-state collectives with state-like coercive powers in Afghanistan during the 1990s, a phenomenon at odds with the conventional anthropological understanding of warfare and socio-political complexity. Other theoretically significant issues relate to the broader global implications of the changing nature of armed conflict, the privatization and demilitarization of warfare, and transnational violence emanating from, and warfare in, the voids in the international system left behind by failing, failed, and collapsed states in the post-Cold War period.

In this paper I examine the genesis of the Afghan war and its various permutations covering roughly the period from 1978, the date of the Marxist seizure of power, to 2001, when the state had collapsed and sub-state actors such as the *Taliban* and *al-Qaeda* had turned Afghanistan into a base of operations. My focus is on the causal dynamics embedded in the broader interstate relations of the world system and its competing military complexes during the second half of the twentieth century.

Afghanistan and the Bipolar Cold War System

The factors leading to the outbreak of the war in Afghanistan can be traced back to the post-World War II alterations in global military

and political configurations that affected Afghanistan in various ways. Several events were particularly significant. First there was the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan with the departure of the British in 1947, which resulted in a bitter border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan, known as the Pashtunistan issue. Another crucial development was the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower with increasing hegemonic hold over Central Asia. Finally, there was the Cold War between the United States and the USSR and its associated competing alliance systems.

During the early 1950s the United State's primary interest was in the Persian Gulf region with its vast reserves of petroleum, protected through operational bases and intelligence facilities offered by the Shah of Iran. Another U.S. ally in the region was Pakistan. Iran and Pakistan became the major recipients of U.S. economic and military assistance. The Soviets formed their own alliance system with India, Pakistan's rival in the region. Afghanistan assumed a buffer state position, situated between the competing alliance systems that dragged developing countries into webs of economic and military dependency (cf., Klare and Volman 1996: 39–40; Jawad 1992: 17).

In the Cold War international system, involvement by the super-powers in Third World countries was framed in terms of the East-West competition, in which particular areas assumed strategic importance in relation to one side or the other gaining influence, rather than out of a genuine interest in economic development or social justice (Snow 1991: 46). The Cold War alliance system, which led to the polarization and gridlock of the international system, relegated Afghanistan along with a number of other small dependent states in the periphery of the world-system to the status of buffers and battlegrounds (cf., Leeds 1973: 508; Bergesen 1989: 89). Points of conflict increasingly centred upon influence and control over these peripheral areas, with the two superpowers striving to establish economic and political hegemonies and preventing their rival from gaining a similar position in the Third World (Bergesen 1989: 96). The outcome was a series of interventionary confrontations that were disastrous for the particular countries transformed into battlefields (Falk 1980: 202).

In 1953 Daoud Khan, King Zahir Khan's cousin, became the prime minister (Dupree 1973a: 499–558). He attempted to capitalize on the country's buffer status in the Cold War system by vigorously pursuing funding both from the Americans and the Russians to expand the state apparatus and military power. The Soviets supplied an array of modern armaments, including tanks, warplanes, and helicopters, as

well as establishing an officer training program for Afghan candidates in Russia, and sending advisors to Afghan military academies. The United States provided economic aid, but refused to supply military assistance (Poullada 1987: 42–43; Poullada and Poullada 1995). At the time, Washington considered Afghanistan to be strategically insignificant. However, by the mid-1950s, as the Cold War intensified, the United States stepped up its aid program as part of its strategy of "containing communism," so that Afghanistan would not become an exclusive Soviet preserve (Ewans 2002: 113; Rubin 2000a: 31).

The flow of economic aid from the two superpowers was highly uneven. During the period between 1955 and 1978, the Soviets provided over a billion dollars in economic assistance and an equivalent sum in military aid (Rubin 2000a: 32). The American contribution was around half a billion in economic aid (Rubin 2000a: 32). Afghanistan became a type of "rentier state," a polity that derives more than 40 percent of its revenues from external sources (Rubin 1992: 78). Reliance on foreign subsidies enabled the continued expansion of the state apparatus and a modernized sector without the need for state authorities to negotiate with or to be accountable to the citizenry who were not called upon to finance the enterprise through the payment of taxes (Rubin 1992: 78).

Higher education to train a new generation of civil administrators for the expanding state bureaucracy was also funded from outside sources, including the Soviet Union, the United States, France, and West Germany. Egypt's Al-Azhar University, a major centre of radical Islamic thought at the time, provided training in Islamic law and education (Rubin 1992: 78).

The influx of Soviet economic and military aid resulted in a significant expansion of state apparatus and the size and power of its military. The balance of destructive firepower was thus shifted in favour of the state as opposed to rural society, as had previously been the case. This pattern of militarization must be viewed as a manifestation of the wider interstate relations and competition between the superpowers. While the bifurcation between the urban-based modernizing state and rural society remained in place, the state now wielded powerful coercive instrumentalities, a well-equipped modern army and police force fully capable of not only rapidly crushing political opposition and tribal rebellions, but also of guaranteeing law and order throughout most of the country. The state was therefore effectively insulated from the tribal power holders who had overthrown previous dynasts and dynasties.

During his term in office, Daoud vigorously pursued the issue of an independent Pashtun homeland in Pakistan's tribal belt (Dupree 1961). This led to diplomatic tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the dispute soon became embedded in the Cold War competition between the United States, which allied itself with Pakistan, and the Soviet Union, which took up the Afghan cause regarding Pashtunistan. Rising tensions nearly led to war between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The crisis was defused in 1963 when the king asked Dauod to step down as prime minister. The Pashtunistan question eventually faded. However, from that time onward, Pakistan's Punjabi (i.e., non-Pashtun) rulers perceived Afghanistan as a major threat, a perception that greatly influenced their policies during the war against the Soviets and during the post-Soviet and *Taliban* periods (Rubin 2002: 63–64).

In 1964 the King began a bold but unsuccessful experiment with political liberalization, marking a period called the "New Democracy" (see Kakar 1978). Educated urban elites under the influence of 1960s international communist or Islamist ideologies formed political parties. These parties had little or no social constituencies in the countryside. Active in the capital, their membership was drawn solely from among social actors generated by the state's own foreign-funded schools and government scholarships to foreign universities for training as future functionaries in the state bureaucratic apparatus. Members of this new class, however, were hampered from participation in politics and thus became disenchanted with the state (Rubin 1989: 151). It was this relatively new intelligentsia that raised questions regarding the legitimacy of the state.

End of the Monarchy and the Marxist Revolution

The second half of the 1960s was marred by increasing political discontent as foreign aid dwindled and the economy declined. The experiment in democracy ran into problems that eroded the state's legitimacy. Five successive governments rose and fell in less than a decade. Students calling for reform protested in the streets of Kabul (Arnold 1981: 49; Hyman 1982; Rubin 2002: 31). Tensions were exacerbated by a major drought and famine between 1971–1972 in Hazarajat and northern Afghanistan. The incompetent handling of the crisis by the government revealed the extent of its ineffectiveness.

In July 1973, Daoud, the ex-prime minister, overthrew the monarchy with the support of Soviet-trained military officers and the Marxist-Leninist oriented People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). He established the Republic of Afghanistan and took the office of president (Anwar 1988: 84–91; Dupree 1973b). In April, 1978, Daoud was himself toppled and killed in a violent *coup d'état* by mid-level Soviet trained Marxist military officers and the PDPA. The communists established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) (Maley 2002a: 26; Dupree 1979; Anwar 1988: 92–124). Despite suspicions on the part of many, the Soviet Union had no part in either the planning or implementation of the coup, which seems to have been inspired by domestic economic and political concerns and Daoud's increasingly repressive measures against the communists (Garthoff 1985: 939; Collins 1986: 36–47; Cordovez and Harrison 1995: 27; Maley 2002a: 27; Vayrynen 1980).

Although the Marxists referred to the coup as a "revolution" (*inqilab*), in reality it was simply a mutiny by a small group of military officers and the PDPA, a marginal organization whose total social constituency was between 3,000 to 4,000 members (15,000 according to post-war Soviet sources) confined exclusively to the capital and a few other cities.

Almost immediately upon seizing power, in-fighting between the Khalq ("People") and Parcham ("Flag") factions of the PDPA resulted in the elimination of nearly half of the party membership. The organization's capacity to function or implement its policies was gravely undermined (Hammond 1984: 84–87; Arnold 1981: 77; Anwar 1988: 165–202; Rubin 2002: 119; Giustozzi 2000: 3–4).

The radical Khalqis, having emerged victors of the internal power struggle, attempted to solidify their hold on power by physically exterminating all potential rivals. The purge virtually eradicated the military high command, with fifty percent of the entire officer corps lost through executions or desertions (Dick 1987: 16; Dupree 1984: 64). The military, the bulwark of state power, was seriously demoralized and organizationally weakened. Within a year's time, the army fell from a high of 90,000 to a low of 40,000 as a result of desertions (Grau 2002). The viability of the state apparatus which depended upon internal cohesiveness and monopoly over the instruments of coercion was thus badly undermined. Internal dissension was as significant a reason for the DRA's dire politico-military quandaries as was the rebellion in the countryside that began shortly after the Marxists came to power.

Despite their weakened military position, the Khalqis undertook a poorly thought out and incompetently implemented program of radical social reforms with the objective of recreating Afghan society in a single generation (Maley 2002a: 29). This project included the redistribution of land, cancellation of peasant debts, and the establishment of a large-scale literacy program. The government also attempted to reorder gender relations by granting equality to women, freedom of choice in marriage, and banning child marriages. Also, schooling for girls was made mandatory (Anwar 1988: 141–164).

The administrative apparatus the Marxists seized was fragile at the provincial and sub-provincial levels and was based upon non-intrusive accommodation intended to maintain law and order (Barfield 1984: 182). Efforts to introduce drastic reforms in rural areas therefore ran into stiff resistance. To achieve their objectives, however, the Marxists resorted to unrestrained force (Rubin 2002: 115; Helsinki Watch 1984, 1985, 1988; Amnesty International 1986). This constituted a major deviation from expected norms and accepted patterns of state interaction that had evolved over nearly half a century (for a detailed discussion of the Afghan state and society, see Sidky and Akers 2005).

Government actions evoked widespread hostility and the outbreak of a number of localized uprisings. The military capacity of the non-state collectives that rebelled against the DRA was limited to mustering relatively small irregular forces, composed of congeries of kin and allies, with rudimentary chains of command, which lacked the resources and specialized logistical systems for maintaining sustained force against targets. Moreover, weapons at the disposal of these entities were few, outdated, with limited destructive firepower (Shahrani 1984: 7). The disintegration of the state military apparatus and the rapid external military and economic aid to the rebels radically altered this equation.

Various reasons have been forwarded to explain the social reaction to the reforms, including the PDPA's lack of a rural constituency for garnering grassroots support, the disruption of long-standing patron-client relationships which represented the foundations of economic and political relations in rural Afghanistan (Grevemeyer 1980), or a clash between Marxist ideology and Islam (Shahrani 1984: 25). A number of analysts have attributed the rebellion, war, and the ensuing civil chaos to the particular kind of state structure in Afghanistan and the nature of its articulation with rural society, what is called the "weak/failed state syndrome" (Goodson 2001; Rubin 1995; Rotberg 2004).

The weakness of the state alone, however, is only a partial answer, as I shall argue below. Internal structural factors are not the only reasons that weak states can fail and collapse. Such states can be intentionally destabilized by concerted outside intervention. This is precisely what happened when foreign powers commandeered the nascent rebellion and the conflict became enmeshed in the complex global and transnational political alignments (Glaster 2001).

Provoking Invasion

The exact nature and extent of outside intervention in Afghanistan has only recently become clear. These findings not only refute the "official version" of events (Brzezinski 2003: 273), but also shed considerable light upon the role of the interstate system in triggering and shaping the Afghan *jihad* (Harpviken 1999: 182–183; Amnesty International 1995a, 1995b; Lansford 2003).

We now know that the United States began exploring ways of covertly aiding the Afghan rebels in Pakistan as early as April, 1979 (Glaster 2001; Anwar 1988: 229–236). However, weapons from China and the Middle East were already flowing to the rebels before this time (Smith 1995a: 587; Dutt 1981). Jimmy Carter authorized U.S. covert action on July 3, 1979, six months before the Soviet intervention on December 24, 1979. The reasons were outlined in 1998 by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's National Security Advisor, who disclosed that CIA aid was directed to the Afghan rebels with the full understanding that it would provoke a Soviet military response.

The objective was not to help the Afghans rid themselves of an odious and brutal regime and attain "democracy"—the recipients of U.S. largess were equally odious, brutal, and undemocratic (see Helsinki Watch 1984, 1985, 1988)—but rather, as Brzezinski (2003: 273–274) put it, "to give the USSR its own Vietnam," by drawing it "into the Afghan trap." Allegations by the DRA and the Soviets of covert CIA operations inside Afghanistan (Ashitkov et al. 1986; Galiullin 1988; DRA 1983, 1984) were summarily dismissed as propaganda at the time by most Western observers, anthropologists, and area specialists (Garthoff 1985: 942; Glaster 2001).

The overall ideological and material conditions for the crescendo of violence that befell Afghanistan were orchestrated by a coalition of regional and global powers. Their concerted efforts not only provoked the Soviet invasion, but also helped cast the conflict in terms of a

jihad, or religious war. Events therefore did not unfold in the way most analysts believed: "The assumption of power by ... [the Marxists] touched off the current violent armed struggle—or *jihad*—and in turn led to the intervention of the Soviets" (Shahrani 1984: 41).

Some analysts have argued that the evocation of the idea of *jihad* and mobilization of Islam and the religious networks around *madrassas* (religious schools) was the key to how sub-state groups initiated a large-scale response (Harpviken 1997). The fact that groups mobilized in this manner but excluded from foreign funding failed is explained away as an effect rather than a cause of their failure (Harpviken 1997: 276). This argument is simply not sustained by the evidence. The transformation of sporadic uncoordinated, small-scale uprisings by groups lacking the economic resources or firepower for sustained violence into a "national-level *jihad*" was not something that simply happened on its own. Nor did it happen because of some invisible "potential" embedded in rural society, undetected by anthropologists and luckily kept hidden from Soviet strategist who might have consulted anthropological texts (contra Canfield 1986: 99–100). The small scale uprisings were transformed into a large-scale war because of massive external intervention. Cold Warrior anthropologists obfuscated this dimension of the war.

Spearheading the *jihad* was the United States with major roles played by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, the Gulf States, Britain, France, and China. Saudi Arabia matched U.S. cash subsidies, and Soviet-made weapons, such as the lethal Kalashnikov AK-47 automatic rifles were supplied by Egypt to provide "plausible deniability" for U.S. involvement (Coll 2004; Cooley 2002: 65–85; Prados 2002; Harclerode 2001; Klare 1989a). China provided masses of the Type-56 assault rifle, which is an exact duplicate of the AK-47.

A large arms pipeline and "globe-spanning network of proxies and collaborators" established by the CIA soon brought an impressive array of modern weapons to the region (Klare 1989b: 113). Collectively referred to as "small arms and light weapons" (SALW), these included automatic rifles, light machine-guns, sniper rifles, mortars, anti-aircraft guns, rocket propelled grenade launchers (RPGs), anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-air missiles, antipersonnel landmines, and millions of rounds of ammunition (Coll 1992; Pear 1988; Weiner 1988; Klare 1989a).

Altogether the CIA, with the financial assistance of Saudi Arabia, funnelled between six and nine billion dollars worth of weapons to the Afghan rebels (Faltas and Paes 2001: 13). The Soviets for their part

contributed 5.7 billion dollars in arms and equipment to the Afghan government (Rubin 2000a: 37). On a per capita basis, Afghanistan became one of the most heavily armed nations on earth (Rubin 2000a: 37). The region-wide socio-political, economic, and security ramifications of such massive militarization continue to be felt many decades later (Smith 1995b: 62).

Anthropologists and area experts writing at the time of the war were either oblivious to, or altogether ignored, the foreign sponsorship of the *jihad* (e.g., Klass 1987: 16–17). In an analysis paper, Allan and Stahl (1983: 598) provided an elaborate mathematical model to predict the outcome of the war that treated the conflict strictly as "a tribal guerrilla war against a colonial power," altogether omitting the central role of the international sponsors of the *jihad* as a variable. Others emphatically dismissed charges of CIA-*mujahideen* connections (Shahrani 1984).

Still others treated the arms shipments as if they were a peripheral phenomenon in relation to the *jihad* (Dupree 1984: 69). As Dupree (1983: 137) stated, "Although some weapons have been supplied to the freedom fighters by interested nations, neither the quantity nor quality have been sufficient to make an impact." Later Dupree wrote, "The Americans and Pakistanis have influence (arms and humanitarian aid in particular)," only to reach the implausible conclusion that "the war inside Afghanistan would continue with or without such assistance." Others acknowledged the arms shipments, but failed to grasp the significant role of the type of weaponry in the conflict (e.g., Roy 1991: 35–36).

Far from being a peripheral phenomenon, the small arms and light weapons were a decisive factor in the Afghan *jihad* and the horrors that befell the Afghan people in the aftermath of the *jihad* (see below). In the post-Cold War period, SALW have emerged as a major global security threat. As I shall discuss below, such weapons, even in small numbers, can cause massive destruction and socio-political havoc when employed against fragile states or to terrorize unarmed civilian populations (cf., Boutwell et al. 1995: 9).

With no centralized supervisory structures in place because of a concern for secrecy and non-accountability, the CIA's arsenal pipeline leaked badly, with the hardware siphoned off and divided up at each transit point before reaching the intended recipients (Smith 1995b:64; Adams 1990: 67–69). Some of the arms ended up in the hands of the Pakistani military intelligence, the Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This organization indiscriminately

plundered the supplies thereby amassing a vast arsenal with which it armed Islamic militants in Kashmir in the 1990s and the *Taliban*, who appeared on the scene in 1994 (Klare 1989b: 115; Rashid 2001: 28; Davis 2001: 24–25). Some of the equipment was sold in the gun bazaars in Pakistan. Afghan rebel leaders in Peshawar grew wealthy by selling millions of dollars worth of the CIA's weapons, including Stinger missiles, to criminal elements, heroin kingpins, and Iranian militants (Smith 1995a: 585; Smith 1995b: 66; Weiner 1990: 150).

Sophisticated, portable, and with an operational life of up to 40 years, the weapons proliferated rapidly, changing hands between non-state groups operating in an area (Smith 1995a: 583; Hiller and Wood 2003: 20). As the quantities of weapons increased, prices dropped, and soon all groups in the region were in possession of large-calibre automatic weapons (Weiner 1990: 150).

Differential access inside Afghanistan to sophisticated military hardware provided by the CIA pipeline created a new wealthy military elite, whose source of power and authority was based on the control of the material "means of destruction." These emergent power holders displaced the pre-war landed elite, whose power was based on the control of the means of production and personal patron-client relationships with state authorities.

Soviet Military Intervention

In the months that followed the Khalqi takeover, the anti-DRA uprisings spread and there were mutinies in military garrisons in Kabul, Rishkhor, and Herat (Glaster 2001; Grau 2002). The government retaliated by escalating the scale and intensity of violence against rural areas and rebellious military units. In desperation, the DRA leadership appealed to Moscow for help. Altogether 20 requests for Soviet troops were made in 1979. The Soviets sent military aid and advisors, but refused to commit soldiers.

By year's end circumstances inside Afghanistan looked grim and Moscow entertained the idea of "a regime change," a concept familiar to us in the context of the U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 (Saikal and Maley 1989; Bradsher 1999; Collins 1986). The military operation took place in late December, with a *coup de main,* a strategy previously used in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, with the objective of replacing the hard line DRA leadership with moderate Parchamis, and remaining long enough to stabilize the political situation (Grau 2002). The Soviets quickly became bogged down and what was intended to be merely

a swift surgical military operation ended up as a nearly decade long military entanglement (Grau 1996; Yousaf and Adkin 1992).

Low-Intensity Conflict

When Ronald Reagan became President in 1980 he took up an extreme hard-line policy, which amounted to making the Soviets pay by "fighting to the last Afghan" (Cordovez and Harrison 1995: 2–16; Cogan 1993; Bonosky 2001; Anwar 1988: 229–236). Among the pivotal events for this policy shift were the fall of the Shah of Iran at the start of 1979 and the resultant loss of U.S. military bases protecting the Persian Gulf, and the failure of the U.S. military to rescue the American hostages in Tehran in April, 1980 (Adams 1987: 87–107). The debacle in the Iranian desert that terminated the rescue operation raised questions about the U.S. military's capacity to successfully engage in covert operations and the ability of the United States to protect its global interests. The Reagan administration undertook steps to rectify these perceived weaknesses and reassert U.S. military might which would be tested in support of "anti-Marxist insurgencies" in places such as Afghanistan (Sloan 1992: 8; Copson 1988).

The decision was to engage the Soviets in a "low-intensity conflict" a strategy devised by U.S. military planners in which direct confrontation was transformed into an indirect battle shifted to a Third World theatre with an "expendable" population (Gallagher 1992: 9; Leeds 1973: 509; Hippler 1987; Klare 1989b; Prados 1986: 279–401). The label low-intensity, however, should not detract from the scale or level of violence that such conflicts involve, as evidenced by what happened in Afghanistan. The United States could thus maintain an aggressive Third World policy while avoiding the adverse publicity and the costly alternative of a large-scale military intervention, as in the case of the Vietnam War. Low-intensity conflict was not only relatively inexpensive, but it did not require the commitment of U.S. combatants because the actual fighting on the ground was conducted by local recruits and foreign mercenaries (cf., Hippler 1987).

The CIA packaged the low-intensity conflict in Afghanistan as a religious war, or *jihad*, tapping into a pre-existing popular ideology and religious idiom (Carpenter 1994: 79). Afghanistan thus became the battlefield in which the Americans would fight a proxy war with their Cold War rival using locals and a mercenary army of militant Muslims, or *jihadi*s, recruited in the name of Islamic solidarity from over fifty

countries. Many of these *jihadi*s were highly unsavoury characters, violent extremists, and hardened criminals released from jails in their home countries, such as Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, etc., on the condition that they fight in Afghanistan. The *jihad* also brought people like Osama Bin Laden, who arrived with large bank rolls to facilitate fellow Arabs—who became known as "Afghan-Arabs" (Rubin 1997: 179)—to come to Afghanistan to fight and die for Allah. Afghanistan thus became a magnet for Muslim militants, providing them with opportunities to make contacts, recruit additional members, and establish global networks (Berzins and Cullen 2003: 20). The presence of these militants contributed to the further radicalization of the Afghan *mujahideen* parties (Carpenter 1994: 79).

Pakistan served as the staging ground for the operation, where recruits received training, arms, and money (Grare 2003; Coll 2004; Goodson 2000; Cooley 2002: 65–85; Prados 2002; Harclerode 2001; Gibbs 1996; Friedman 1995; Goodson 2002; Weiss 1986). Pakistan's military intelligence, the ISI, an entity that has virtually run that country's foreign policy (Goodson 2000; Weiss 1986), was placed in charge of the secret war. In return for its services, Pakistan received large stockpiles of weapons and several billion dollars for its own use.

Agendas of the *Jihad* Sponsors

The Afghan *jihad* would not come to an end anytime soon because it furthered the agendas of its sponsors and all others who benefited from the enterprise economically, politically, or both. The war was extremely profitable for Pakistan, which did not want an end to the massive windfall it brought (Sidky and Akers 2005). It also enabled Islamabad to develop a nuclear arsenal without U.S. objections because Carter and Reagan overturned congressional legislation on nuclear proliferation to garner Pakistani support in the Afghan *jihad* (Spector 1988: 120–153; Klare 1989b: 114, 117). Moreover, as the facilitator on the ground, Pakistan could further its own Islamist political agenda of putting a pliant pro-Islamabad government in Afghanistan, engrossed with a transnational Islamic agenda of recreating the *ummah* (universal community of believers) instead of pursuing Afghan nationalism and the Pashtunistan issue. With such an ally to the west, Pakistan would achieve "strategic depth" against India.

The Saudis sought to counteract Shia Iran's bid for ascendancy in the Islamic world by establishing a strong Sunni client in the region (Carpenter 1994: 81). This is also why the Saudis funded the pro-Wahhabi Deobandi *madrassa*s along the Afghan-Pakistan frontier, which produced the Taliban in the mid-1990s (Sirrs 2001).

The United States had no desire for the *jihad* to end because it was achieving the objective of giving the Soviets "their own Vietnam," without loss of American lives. Few outside the U.S. intelligence community were even aware that the CIA was engaged in the largest covert operation in its history (Crile 2002; Glaster 2001). Washington therefore did not merge its efforts at arming the rebels with United Nations peace initiatives that may well have led to an earlier Soviet withdrawal (Cordovez and Harrison 1995: 10).

The distribution of money and weapons to the rebels was left up to ISI agents who were guided by Pakistan's Islamist geopolitical agenda. The ISI channelled the bulk of the military aid to the most radical and anti-West factions, which represented the interests of a small minority of Afghans (Harpviken 1999: 172). Left out of the disbursement process were the supporters of the royal family and secular nationalist parties that had broader social constituencies inside the country and were equally committed to expelling the Soviets from Afghanistan (Rubin 1996).

A related phenomenon linked to the manner in which different groups were funded was the politicization of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan. International relief aid to the refugees was channelled through the seven *mujahideen* parties organized by the ISI. To receive aid, men had to join one of these parties and fight on its behalf. Humanitarian aid not only became a significant source of leverage for the rebel parties, but it also helped sustain the conflict, with up to forty percent feeding directly into the war economy in the same way that such aid has financed and perpetuated the "new wars" of the post-Cold War period in Afghanistan and elsewhere (Goodhand 2003: 12; Kaldor 1999: 10, 110).

The strategy developed with respect to the Afghan refugees amounted to a "fight for food" program. Not to fight would result in the cancellation of party membership and the end of rations for one's family (Anwar 1988: 238). The refugee population in Pakistan, some four million at its peak, thus became a captive and economically dependent source of manpower from which rebel commanders and ISI operatives could recruit fighters. To talk about the war solely in terms of "cultural well-springs of resistance" (Barth 1987) or "an ages-old

culture responding to late twentieth-century aggression" (Dupree 1984), as Cold Warrior anthropologists writing at the time were prone to do, provides a romanticized but skewed and simplistic perspective on an extremely complex conflict.

The War and its Duration

The years after the Soviet invasion were brutal and traumatic. Detailed analyses of the actual Soviet and *mujahideen* military encounters and tactics, which are beyond the scope of this paper, are provided by Dick (1987), Grau (1996), Jalali and Grau (1999), and Grau and Gress (2002). In broad terms, the war vacillated back and forth between rebel attacks on government installations and military patrols, assassinations of government officials, murder of school teachers, rocketing of government held towns, and counter strikes by Soviet-Afghan forces in the form of aerial bombardments, artillery strikes, helicopter gunship attacks, mine-sowing operations, destruction of entire villages, and the systematic infliction of massive civilian casualties (Grau 1996). The targeting of civilians resulted in the dislocation of millions of people who either fled to the cities or escaped as refugees to Pakistan and Iran.

As the war continued, each side and its respective foreign sponsor/sponsors elevated the violence to new levels. For example, by the mid-1980s the Soviets changed their strategy by employing highly aggressive counterinsurgency tactics using their Spetsnaz Special Forces and armoured MI-24D attack helicopters for aerial search-and-destroy missions. With the objective of a decisive victory within two years, these tactics turned the tide of the war and may have indeed worked.

However, the Americans responded by giving the rebels Stinger missiles equipped with an infra-red "fire-and-forget" heat seeking guidance system, the most effective portable anti-aircraft weapon known at the time (Bearden 2001: 21; Adams 1990: 58–80; Kuperman 1999; Crile 2003; Coll 1992). Over one thousand Stinger missiles were shipped to the *mujahideen*, of which two to three hundred are still in circulation (Gertz 2000). The weapon scored a remarkable 75% kill ratio (McManaway 1990) contrary to what some journalist claimed (e.g., Urban 1990: 296). And so the conflict continued over the next several years without any signs of abating, at an appalling cost to the Afghan people.

The nature, scale, intensity, and duration of the violence in Afghanistan cannot be explained in terms of cultural attributes particular to the Afghan people, i.e., their "Islamic fundamentalism" or "warrior traditions" because the kind of violence and destructive firepower that the Soviets and Americans unleashed on Afghanistan had no historical precedents. It was a conflict that was designed and shaped by broader global forces and players over which the Afghans had no control (cf., Rubin 2000a: 23).

The war did not begin as an Islamist revolution. The anti-government uprisings were isolated reactions over brutally implemented social reforms by the Khalqi government (cf., Ovesen 1988). The nascent civil war was transformed into a religious war when the CIA commandeered it because the United States packaged its low intensity conflict with the Russians in Afghanistan as a *jihad*.

The Afghan Islamists that the CIA and ISI transmuted into the *mujahideen* had their origins among the urban elite, just like the Marxists, and had little social constituency outside a very small circle of followers. They were a failed force inside Afghanistan, as evidenced by their two abortive coup attempts against the Daoud government. Islam was never a major political force inside Afghanistan (Carpenter 1994: 78), not at least until the foreign sponsors of the *jihad* made it so by devising a multibillion dollar arms pipeline and forging an international network that brought Islamic radicals from around the globe to take part in the war. Put differently, politicization and radicalization of Islam and Islamic militancy were the by-products of the war, not its cause.

Others have attributed the duration of the war to Soviet imperialism, quest for "warm water ports," desire for global domination, etc. (Poullada 1987; Klass 1987; Dupree 1987). We now have the minutes of the Politburo, which were made public following the Cold War. These reveal that there were no imperial ambitions behind the military intervention (Kornienko 1994). In fact, Soviet officials repeatedly denied pleas from Kabul to send troops through most of 1979 (Savranskaya 2001). Their decision to intervene, which was with considerable trepidations and not without internal opposition (Cordovez and Harrison 1995: 4–5), was prompted by U.S. and Pakistani covert operations with the stated objective of drawing the Soviets into "an Afghan trap."

Attributing the duration and intensity of the war to the extraordinary bellicosity of Afghan tribesman is also untenable. It involves an error noted by Ferguson (1989: 148) in another context,

that of ascribing overall warlike nature to a culture by generalizing attributes characteristic of particular groups or unusual historical periods to represent the whole, overlooking more typical periods of peaceful existence and the wide range of ethnic and sectarian variability of the country.

The traditional pattern of warfare in Afghanistan was what anthropologists call the blood feuding/revenge complex (cf., Reyna l994: 42; Keiser 1991). Such fighting involves local solidarity groups which consist of what Reyna (1994: 42) has called "kin militias." In such formations, combat takes place according to descent group logic of grudge resolution and mutual assistance rather than political objectives.

Afghan kin militias lacked the specialized armaments, firepower, or logistical systems that would enable them to project violence for spans of time longer than a few weeks. Typically fighting by such groups is limited to a sequence of raids and battles aimed at driving off foes (cf., Reyna 1994: 42–43). Moreover, such fighting is a part-time occupation pursued at specific intervals of the year because of the time constraints associated with labour demands for subsistence farming. There was, therefore, nothing in the pattern of violence embedded in Afghan society to explain the characteristics, intensity, and duration of the *jihad* and what happened afterwards.

State Collapse, New Patterns of Warfare, and Asymmetrical Transnational Violence

The Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. Despite their departure, which was the stated purpose for the foreign aid to the rebels, the *jihad* sponsors continued to fund the *mujahideen* in order to topple the Kabul regime. Contrary to the prediction of political analysts (Karp 1986: 1026), the Kabul government remained in power for three more years. The regime fell in 1992, a year after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and termination of military aid to Kabul. The *mujahideen* had apparently won. In the eyes of people in the Muslim world, Islam was vindicated by its purported triumph over an atheistic superpower.

Peace and reconstruction did not ensue from the ostensible victory (Rubin 1995: 34–91; Saikal and Maley 1989; Norchi 1995). What followed was more violence and the country slid into chaos, anarchy, and a humanitarian disaster of huge proportions. This is

because the *jihad* had profoundly changed the social and political landscape. The country was awash with weaponry and all legitimate political institutions of governance had eroded (Rubin 1995: 96–146). There were no social mechanisms for disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating combatants back into civil society. Gone as well were the traditional mechanisms of conflict management and norms governing violence, which had been shattered in the context of the massively destructive all-out warfare to which Afghan society was subjected.

The war created novel military formations, modelled after the *qawm*, the clientelistic "survival networks" of traditional pre-war society, but larger in scale and with full-time combatants wielding massive destructive firepower (cf., Harpviken 1999). With large arsenals, which now included what the Soviets had supplied their client government in Kabul, and various illicit economic enterprises to fund their efforts (see below), these sub-state collectives wielded state-like coercive powers, such as the capability of exerting direct and sustained force against targets (cf., Ferguson and Whitehead 1992: 19; Harpviken 1997).

In this context, military firepower and the ability to inflict violence, rather than appeal to broad social constituencies, emerged as the basis of political contestation and ascendancy (cf., Boutwell and Klare 2000: 49). Armed paramilitary groups could operate without accountability to the general population and acquired brutal predatory characteristics (Harpviken 1999).

Individuals aligned themselves with these formations as a strategy of coping with political and military threats and as a means of making a living because of an absence of alternative modes of livelihood. Under these circumstances, commanders could recruit fighters for the cost of one meal a day (Goodhand 2003). Given these conditions, demilitarization was not an option for anyone. The rebels were confronted with what Otterbein (1994: 181) has called "the dilemma of disarming" because of the risk of arbitrary violence, predatory behaviour, and dispossession by other armed groups.

Under circumstances where command over violence was fragmented among diverse paramilitary groups, reconstituting state power, which hinges upon monopoly over the instruments of coercion to ensure civil security, was well nigh impossible. Internecine slaughter gripped the capital soon after the rebels arrived. The city was demolished one neighbourhood at a time. Deliberately targeted, over 30,000 civilian were killed and 100,000 wounded (Amnesty International 1995a, 1995b; Ewans 2002: 184). Many more fled as refugees. For the local

population the *mujahideen* emerged as a force more abhorrent than the regime the rebels overthrew.

Such pervasive internal violence is a correlate of state failure and collapse. A failed state is a polity that is unable to exercise monopoly over the instruments of coercion throughout its territory, cannot safeguard the rule of law or render judgments that are internationally recognized as legitimate, cannot fulfil international obligations, and is incapable of stopping transnational criminal enterprises on its soil or the use of its territory as a base of operation for violence against other states in the international system (ASC 2003: 4). A collapsed state is one in which institutions of governance break up altogether.

The state in Afghanistan collapsed when violence led to the disintegration of the remaining vestiges of central control. The country was transformed into a de-regulated land corridor between Central Asia and South Asia (Pain and Goodhand 2002: 15). This volatile and unpredictable environment gave rise to new forms of organized violence. These later became known as "new wars" (Kaldor 1999), a kind of conflict that erupted in the 1990s in various places around the globe, such as Africa, the Balkans, and Central Asia.

In such conflicts it is difficult to differentiate between war in the Clausewitzian sense of organized violence as an instrument of politics, organized crime (i.e., violence by private organizations for economic gain), and massive human rights violations, or indiscriminate violence against individuals (Kaldor 1999: 2; Klare 1999: 19; Musser and Nemecek 2000: 46; Duyvesteyn 2000). The violence and criminalized economic enterprises engaged in by the various actors in the conflict—*mujahideen* warlords, ethnic militias, Afghan-Arabs, and the *Taliban*—encompassed all these attributes.

New wars are set apart from other wars by their political underpinnings, strategic objectives, modes of fighting and weaponry, financing, and transnational dimensions (Kaldor 1999: 6). Such new forms of organized violence have forced analysts, security experts, and historians of warfare to rethink the very concept of war and the future of armed conflict (Gareev 1998; Kaldor 1999; Prins and Tromp 2000; Duffield 2001; Harkavy and Neuman 2001; Coker 2002; Schilling 2002; Gray 2002).

With the collapse of the state in Afghanistan, the basis of war shifted toward what Kaldor (1999: 6) calls "identity politics," in which claims to power and political mobilization are based upon exclusionary sectarian, ethnic, or linguistic identities decoupled from nationalistic ideologies, the idea of the state, or national interests. It should be

noted that ethnic identities are not "things-in-themselves," things "ineradicable" and intrinsic to groups based on "ancient hatreds" or "primordial tribal antagonisms" (contra Kaplan 1993, 1994), but emerge at the boundary between groups and are activated under specific circumstances as a means of mobilization in relation to alternative available organizational modes, competing groups, and the cost-benefits of those alternatives (Richards 2005: 8; Barth 1996). Such identities are often invented under circumstances where the political legitimacy of the nation-state has eroded and conditions are created in which sub-state actors can opt out of the state system altogether (Cerny 2005:15), as in Afghanistan in the 1990s.

Wars fought on the basis of identity politics are about exclusion, secession, and fragmentation rather than about integration and the establishment of inclusive societies (Evans 2003: 136–137). This is why no one was able or willing to recreate the state. Afghanistan persisted as a phantom image on the world map while its geographical space slide into regionalism, sectarianism, "warlordism," and the imposition of violence and extortion upon civil society by armed factions (Rotberg 2004: 10; Giustozzi 2000: 240; on "warlords" and "warlordism" and the appropriateness of these terms in the Afghan context see Giustozzi 2003; Roberts 1989). Sub-state actors assumed regional control and established fiefdoms with their own local security arrangements, trade networks, and external relations (cf., Maley and Saikal 1992; Roy 1995).

In the new wars, control over territory is achieved not by winning the "hearts and minds" of the local population, as in classical guerrilla warfare, but by means of counterinsurgency techniques of destabilization through intimidation to instil "fear and hatred" (Kaldor 1999: 8, 98). The objective is to purposefully eliminate people of different identity, i.e., "annihilating difference," by means of large-scale slaughter, coercive relocation, extortion, and other modes of intimidation, such as rape and torture (cf., Kaldor 1999:8, 98; Klare 2004: 119; see Hinton 2002). Civilian populations are often the deliberate targets in such conflicts (Lumpe 1998).

The *mujahideen* targeted civilians with mortar and rocket attacks and opposing factions celebrated victories by abducting and raping women in their rivals' territories (Amnesty International 1995a), while the *Taliban* and the Arab mercenaries engaged in ethnic cleansing and other genocidal acts against Shias and non-Pashtuns (Human Rights Watch 2001a; United Nations Report 2001; Amnesty International 2001).

Another feature of the war was the involvement of an array of different types of fighting groups, ranging from paramilitary units, to warlord militias, elements of the former national army, conflict profiteers, such as the Pakistani Quetta and Chaman-based trucking cartel and Afghan drug barons engaged in trans-border smuggling, transnational actors such as the Afghan-Arab mercenaries, regional actors, such as contingents of the Pakistani army in civilian garb, and ISI personnel coordinating the *Taliban*. This made it difficult to differentiate between the soldier and criminal, foreign and local fighter, and combatant and non-combatant. Also, unlike the hierarchically structured military forces of conventional armies, combatants were organizationally decentralized (cf., Kaldor 1999: 8).

The war in Afghanistan was fought with highly lethal small arms and light weapons in conjunction with advance communications equipment, satellite phones and computers for sharing information and coordinating military operations. The central role of this technology and type of armaments cannot be underestimated. In Afghanistan and elsewhere, SALW have been responsible for the obliteration of state institutions of governance and the transformation of once peaceful regions into major conflict and humanitarian disaster zones (Klare 2004; Smith 1995a: 583). On account of their massive destructive power, weapons experts now consider small and light arms as "the de facto weapons of mass destruction" of the late-20th and early 21st centuries (Boutwell et al. 1995).

The enormous quantities of SALW that the United States and the Soviet Union supplied remain in circulation today (Renner 1999: 24). The Afghan war thus inaugurated what analysts in the 1990s referred to as "Kalashnikov Age warfare" in which the adolescent human adult armed with a Kalashnikov emerged as "the most deadly combat system of the . . . epoch" causing tens of thousands and sometimes hundreds of thousands of deaths, a casualty rate ordinarily associated with the "all-out warfare between modern mechanized armies" (Klare 1999: 19).

Surprisingly, the investigation of the effects of SALW upon societies awash with them, which ought to be a topic of high research priority by anthropologists interested in war, has been ignored. This is surprising given the inordinate amount of attention paid to the impact of European weapons on small-scale cultures during the 19th century and earlier (Ferguson and Whitehead 1992; see the overview by Hacker 1994: 819–821).

Moreover, while anthropologists studying contemporary warfare have paid considerable attention to "divergent narratives" and

meaning "in the genesis and reproduction of violence" (Stewart and Strathern 2002: 17) and the analysis of the "experiential level" of violence (Robben and Nordstrom 1995: 10), they appear to have forgotten the instrumentalities of violence or the material "means of destruction" that SALW represent and without which many of the acts of violence described would not be possible.

Light weapon technology and abundant supplies of such arms are in large part to blame for the escalation of violence because they facilitate the transformation of ordinary socio-political disputes into armed conflagrations. The weapons in question have in fact changed the very nature of how the majority of conflicts during the end of the 20th and start of the 21st centuries have been fought (Boutwell and Klare 1999: 6; Klare 1999: 21).

Supply seems to be key, as arms control experts have almost unanimously concluded, that acts both as "trigger" for conflict and "fuel" to sustain long-term warfare (Hiller and Wood 2003: 23; Graduate Institute of International Studies 2001; Pirseyedi 2000; Smith 1995a). The Afghan war in all its phases simply could not have been sustained without a massive supply of the type of arms and ammunition provided by economically powerful sponsors situated elsewhere in the global system.

The attributes of the weapons, the destructive powers of which are highly disproportionate to their size and cost, are the basis of another feature of this new kind of violence. Take, for example, a modern assault rifle like the Kalashnikov. As Boutwell and Klare (2000: 49) have observed:

Modern assault rifles can fire hundreds of rounds of ammunition per minute. A single gunman can slaughter dozens or even hundreds of people in a short time. With the incredible firepower of such arms, untrained civilians—even children—can become deadly combatants. Unlike weapons of earlier eras, which typically required precision aiming and physical strength to be used effectively, ultralight automatic weapons can be carried and fired by children as young as nine or 10.

Anyone who can secure such weapons and gather up enough people to wield them, including children with no training, can become a self-styled warlord. Light arms technology has therefore contributed in the "privatization" and "demilitarization" of warfare in which now civilians are both the combatants and the victims (Regehr 2001). Such combatants abide by no codes of military conduct and most have never heard of the international human rights law

or international humanitarian law. Violence perpetrated by such combatants is especially brutal and often indiscriminate in nature.

The insecurity created by the abundance of SALW encourages the further use and demand for such arms, producing localized arms races. This results in what some writers have called the phenomenon of "Kalashnikovization," the creation of "a culture of lawlessness and violence," named after the ubiquitous automatic weapon flooding the region (Goodson 2000: 120).

The economic dimensions of the Afghan war are relevant to this discussion as well in illustrating the manner in which such wars are funded. The CIA covert aid associated with the Afghan *jihad* quickly monetized the economy and created complex funding schemes that empowered rebel groups to take over and monopolize lucrative illicit enterprises, such as opium production, drug trafficking, illegal timber operations, trans-border smuggling of gems, Western manufactured goods, and antiquities to underwrite their military and political projects (Weiner 1990: 151–152; McCoy 2003; Cockburn and St. Clair 1998: 255–276; Makarenko 2002; Rubin 2000a, 2000b; Pain and Goodhand 2002: 16; Goodhand 1999; Klare 2004: 121; Pirseyedi 2000; Smith 1995a).

When superpower sponsorship ended, commanders reconfigured the illicit economic enterprises to generate their own funding to maintain their militias, increase their patronage networks, and to acquire additional military equipment. As a result, the war mutated from a foreign subsidized, ideologically based rebellion into an economically motivated struggle characterized by violence, predatory behaviour, and banditry, in which sub-state collectives entered into fierce fighting with one another over control of resources (Goodhand 1999; Vogelsang 2002: 322).

The new political economy that emerged was linked to the international system through illegal and quasi-legal trans-border exchange networks facilitated by Afghanistan's historic geographic position at the cross-roads between Central Asia and South Asia and enhanced by globalization (Pain and Goodhand 2002: 16; Maley 2002a: 156; ASC 2003: 7; Williams 1998; Duffield 2001: 14). Thus, heroin produced in Afghanistan, situated at the periphery of the world economy, could be sold to consumers in international markets at the centre of the global system (Goodhand 1999: 3, 2003). As the flow of resources in this political economy is dependent upon violence, continuation of violence is necessary to ensure access to resources and power, giving such systems their own inertia.

Some observers have puzzled over how the "military success" of the so-called "holy war" resulted in the disaster of an "unholy" civil war and state collapse (Shahrani 2002: 716; Roy 1995). The more pertinent questions one must raise are: Was the *jihad* a success? Whose success was it? Over a one and a half million civilians were dead, millions were maimed and crippled, several million more were living in squalor in refugee camps, there was massive infrastructural damage in cities, towns, and villages, and huge swaths of the countryside had been depopulated or transformed into lethal minefields. The damage extended to the social fabric and the precarious social ties that once held together an ethnolinguistically heterogeneous society, resulting in unprecedented levels of ethnic violence (Rubin 2000a: 27; Amnesty International 1995b).

As if all of this was not enough, with the withdrawal of the Soviet army and collapse of the state in 1992, the U.S. and the international community disengaged completely from Afghanistan. Thereafter the objective of the international community was "containment" rather than a concerted effort to solve the problems for which it was largely responsible. The United Nations' desultory efforts in the region served merely as a pretence to cover up the international community's disengagement (Maley 2001b: 183). The regional and global security implications of abandoning Afghanistan were callously ignored (Saikal 2001; Maley 2001a).

In an era of increased interconnectedness in the international system, often referred to as "globalization," nothing can really be contained, and failing and collapsed states pose a danger not only to the local inhabitants, but also to regional and world peace (Rotberg 2001: 128; Dorff 1996: 19–21). This is because failed and collapsed states remain connected to the international environment through numerous licit and illicit transnational networks. Moreover, the political vacuum of a collapsed state's ungoverned space generates attractive economic and political opportunities for non-state and external actors (Dorff 1996: 19–21). In such spaces, non-state actors can consolidate their power and expand their political or economic agendas by capitalizing on the absence of governance (Berzins and Cullen 2003: 17).

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the two long-time partners in the Afghan *jihad*, quickly set about to fill the political vacuum in Afghanistan. Added items to the Pakistani agenda in the post-Cold War period were the establishment of an Islamic block with the newly independent Central Asian Republics, to obtain the long sought after "strategic

depth" against India. There was also the lucrative possibility of a Turkmenistan-Pakistan oil pipeline, an idea with which Texas oil politicians have been and remain enthralled since George W. Bush's first term in office (Brisard and Dasquié 2002).

Iran had geopolitical intentions of its own by supporting Shia groups inside the country. Other regional powers that became involved in the conflict included Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and India. They were the principle supporters of the United Front (a.k.a. Northern Alliance) in northern Afghanistan.

Still pursuing their objective of placing a strong Islamist Sunni client government in place, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia contrived another military force, the so-called *Taliban*, which along with *al-Qaeda*'s Arab mercenary army would subject the Afghan people to further violence, genocidal attacks, and other atrocities in the name of Islam (Amnesty International 1999a 1999b, 1999c; Griffin 2001: 60; Dupree 2001; Iacopino 1998; Johnson 1998; Human Rights Watch 2001a, 2001b).

The term *Taliban* means "religious students" but the *Taliban* militia and its pseudo-polity, "The Emirate of Afghanistan," was a composite of many elements (Maley 2001c: 62). This was no movement of "young scholars," as Richards (2005: 2) refers to the *Taliban*. Nor were the *Taliban* brought into power by "Islamic ideas" (contra Stewart and Strathern 2002:12). Most Afghans considered the *Taliban* as a foreign movement whose ideology. i.e., "Islamic ideas," had no basis in traditional Afghan Islamic or cultural values (Maley 2001c: 62).

The *Taliban* were an anomalous entity, a proxy army contrived through an odd alliance between the ISI, Saudi Arabian princes, Bin Laden (who returned to Afghanistan in 1996), the Pakistani trucking cartel, Afghan drug lords, ex-Afghan Marxists, and radical Pakistani and ultraconservative Afghan religious leaders, all forces or actors that had been shaped by or were involved in Afghanistan as a consequence of the CIA's anti Soviet *jihad* (Saikal 2001: 10–12; Rubin, 2000b: 1791; Rubin 2002: xxii; Dorronsoros 2002: 166–168; Goodson 2000: 16; Davis 2001: 46; Human Rights Watch 2001a: 23, 26; M. Rubin 2002; Brisard and Dasquié 2002: 15; Roy 2002; Maley 2001c, 2001d; Marsden 2002).

By creating the *Taliban*, Pakistan hoped to stabilize circumstance in the ungoverned space of a collapsed state that had slipped out of control into the anarchy of a gruesome war fought by sub-state actors driven by "identity politics." The draconian rules and regulations the *Taliban* imposed upon the civil society, which baffled and frightened Western observers, were really a kind of martial law devised by a

sub-state foreign paramilitary occupation force whose political idiom was religion. The peace the *Taliban* brought principally benefited the trans-border smugglers and helped consolidate Afghanistan's place at the centre of what became a region-wide war economy (Rubin 2000b: 1791).

The *Taliban* were equipped by Pakistan and Middle Eastern donors with new AK-47 assault rifles, RPGs, and other light weapons, as well as 200 tanks, 400 four-wheel pickup trucks, an air force of six MiG-21s, a dozen MiG-23 jet fighters, six transport Mil-17 helicopters, and fuel and specialist manpower to operate them (Griffin 2001: 40; Rashid 1996; 1999; 2001: 29). Around 80,000 to 100,000 Pakistani recruits fought as part of the *Taliban* in Afghanistan from 1994 and 1999 (Rashid 1996; 1999).

The *Taliban* militia included 8,000 to 15,000 non-Afghans, citizens of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and other Middle East countries, the so-called "Afghan-Arabs" (Human Rights Watch 2001a: 12; Conetta 2002: 52; Rubin 1997, 2002a: xv; Hirschkorn et al. 2001). Around 3,000 to 5,000 of these fighters belonged to Bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* organization (Conetta 2002: 53; Orbach 2001). *Al-Qaeda*'s Brigade 055, the personnel of which included zealous and highly trained Arab mercenaries, based in Kandahar, Kabul, Khost, Jalalabad, and Kunar, with munitions depots in Tora Bora, constituted the most powerful branch of the *Taliban* military (Hirschkorn et al. 2001).

The rapid success of the *Taliban* was due entirely to the massive funding and arms shipments from ISI stockpiles or purchased with cash provided by the Saudis and other Middle Eastern donors (Litavrin 1999: 232). Cash subsidies from Saudis princes and Bin Laden bought off battle-hardened *mujahideen* warlords, hence the myth of the *Taliban*'s invincibility.

The *Taliban* movement was created for reasons other than religion and its proponents did not seek to recreate the state but wanted to opt out of the international state system altogether. This is why the international community for which the nation-state constitutes the only admissible unit of organization could not and did not know how to deal with the *Taliban* for providing sanctuary to Bin Laden. This also accounts for the *Taliban*'s bizarre behaviour to scorn international values by violating UN sanctuary, destroying Afghanistan's pre-Islamic antiquities, imprisoning foreign aid workers, and terrorizing urban women.

Although the phenomenon of *Talibanization* was geographically localized to Afghanistan and Pakistan, it was enmeshed in numerous

transnational linkages. Among other things, these linkages brought to Afghanistan an entirely new generation of "born-again" Muslims from the Middle East and around the globe. Afghanistan once again became a magnet for Islamic militants because of the presence of the *Taliban* and Bin Laden and the "mythical halo" the country had acquired in the Islamic world on account of the anti-Soviet *jihad* (Roy 2001).

Stripped of traditional national identities by globalization, but not integrated into the global economic system, and disillusioned by corruption and social injustice in their homelands, these desperate men were drawn by the idea of a reconstitute *ummah*, the call for *jihad* to free Muslim lands of encroachments by non-believers and corrupt regimes, opposition to Western hegemony, and the alternate Islamic identity proposed by the *Taliban* and *al-Qaeda* that rejected the authority of the interstate system and identities associated the nation state. These men are among today's militant Islamists, some of whom are fighting U.S. forces in Iraq using the appellation *mujahideen*, first made famous in the modern context during the Afghan *jihad*.

The Pakistani-Saudi plan did not work out as it was intended despite massive logistical support and monetary investment into the project because the Arab militants and the *Taliban*, enthralled by the new call to *jihad* directed at the West, transformed Afghanistan into a "reservoir and exporter of international terror" (Rotberg 2002; Maley 2002d) that would reciprocate the violence projected upon that country by the international system.

The backlash from the Afghan battlefield has had systemic repercussions felt from Pakistan to Kashmir, the Arabian Peninsula, East Africa, and Europe. The most dramatic and tragic manifestations of this backlash were the September 11th attacks on U.S. soil (Weaver 1996; Johnson 2002; Hirschkorn et al. 2001). The systemic reverberations of those attacks, in turn, manifested themselves in America's "War on Terror" in Afghanistan in October, 2001 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March, 2003.

Conclusions

Once the central and decisive role played by the interstate system in the Afghan *jihad* is taken into account, dimensions of the conflict become apparent that compel us not only to re-think conventional histories and skewed portrayals by Cold Warrior anthropologists, but also to frame our conceptions of the nature and causes of modern

warfare in terms of broader relations and linkages within the global system and changes within that system facilitated by the process of "globalization."

The increasingly economically interconnected globalised world of the post-Cold War period has not ushered the obsolescence of major war (contra Van Creveld 1991), but has instead created different spaces for violence and the emergence of a perplexing spectrum of conflicts (Evans 2003: 137–138). These range from the conventional Clausewitzian "force-on-force" war, such as the Gulf and Iraq wars, as well as high-technology warfare, such as the air campaign over Bosnia in 1999 and Afghanistan in 2001.

In addition there are the wars fought by sub-state actors driven by identity politics and the unpredictable asymmetric violence by transnational entities, such as *al-Qaeda* (cf., Evans 2003:137). Conventional and high-technology wars are now juxtaposed with a strange mixture of organized violence which, as one military analyst has summed it up:

[comprises] a world of asymmetric ethnopolitical warfare—in which machetes and Microsoft merge, and apocalyptic millenarians wearing Reeboks and Raybans dream of acquiring weapons of mass destruction. To use a Hollywood analogy, it is as if the West's Buck Rogers were now lined up against assorted road warriors from the devastated society portrayed in the "Mad Max" films (Evans 2003: 137).

The new patterns of warfare did not emerge through some mysterious process out of so-called "primordial tensions," "ancient hatreds," "tribal antagonisms," or "seething cauldrons" (contra Kaplan 1993, 1994), but were created through processes within and historical linkages to the global system during the second half of the twentieth century and shifts in that system in the post-Cold War period.

New wars in, and asymmetrical violence emanating from, the gaps in the world system created by failed/collapsed states have fundamentally altered international relations and with it patterns of armed conflict (Evans 2003; Cerny 2005). These changes pertain to issues such as unilateral pre-emptive strikes, "the state as a key unit of international relations," the appropriateness of a state-centred approach to the resolution of conflicts fought by non-state actors that reject the authority of the international system, and the role of nation-states and the interstate system as the principal purveyors of global and national security (Berzins and Cullen 2003: 12–1 3; Cerny 2005).

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