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**The New Wars Debate:**

**Implications for Scholarship and Policy**



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# Abstract

In recent years, the new war debate has gained a lot of currency in academic circles. A number of scholars have argued that the patterns of violence are shifting and the nature of contemporary wars is qualitatively different from the nature of earlier wars. This aspect of the new war thesis has sustained a considerable amount of criticism, mainly from a historical perspective. Historical narratives suggest that the features of new wars have been present in earlier wars, too. This compromises the validity and utility of the new war thesis. The response of the new war literature to its criticism is that the term “new” in new wars is not solely used to describe the new reality of warfare; it is used to accentuate the need for developing new approaches to conflict analysis. Therefore, the utility of the new war debate derives from its capacity to influence scholarship and policy.

The aim of this dissertation is to engage with the new wars debate, to study its premises, evaluate its utility and discuss its implications of scholarship and policy. This is very interesting and important because it involves exploring the fundamental nature of scholarship as well as the fundamental nature of armed conflict and the policies that promote prevention and reconciliation.

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# Introduction

Understanding the nature of war is central to the study of politics and international relations. One of the key objectives of scholarship is to define, explain and predict violent conflict. One of the key objectives of policy makers is to understand the nature of violent conflict and to implement effective policies for conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation. Thus, theorising about the dynamics, causes, implications, trends and patterns of violent conflict has become a primary purpose of academics and policy makers. Over the last decade, a number of scholars have challenged our understanding of armed conflict, and civil war in particular, by arguing that the nature of contemporary wars is qualitatively different from the nature of earlier wars. Their argument holds that “the new wars can be contrasted with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed” (Kaldor 2006: 6). A number of policy makers have also acknowledged the shift in the mode of warfare. They have argued that even though “traditional threats such as terrorism [and] nuclear proliferation... continue to challenge” the international community, we now “face a new constellation of [modern] threats” (Ban Ki-moon 2010). The aim of this dissertation is to engage with the new war debate – to discuss its premises, evaluate its utility and study its implications for scholarship and policy. This is very interesting and important because it involves exploring the fundamental nature of scholarship as well as the fundamental nature of armed conflict and the policies that promote prevention and reconciliation.

The first part of this dissertation considers the challenges of conflict analysis from a methodological point of view. In doing so, this dissertation reflects on the problems associated with the way civil war is defined and codified by different quantitative and qualitative approaches to conflict analysis. One of the limitations of the quantitative approach

to conflict analysis is the reliance on questionable raw data. Raw data collected in a violent environment is often unverifiable. Moreover, even if the data was verifiable, the question of the objectivity of the researcher persists. Indeed, raw data can be subjected to biased selection and interpretation. Thus, the patterns of violence identified by potentially biased quantitative research do not always stand up to scrutiny. In comparison, anthropological studies of conflict analysis build their arguments on qualitative analysis of the social, political and economic factors that lead to the eruption of violent conflict. The weakness of such analysis is that it is case specific and, while it is very useful in explaining the specific instances of violent conflict, it does not have cross-country relevance. This dissertation argues that scholars need to be aware of the limitations of quantitative and qualitative research, and they should aim to combine the two research strategies in order to enhance the validity and utility of their findings.

The second part of the dissertation engages with the new wars debate. In recent years, the new wars thesis has gained a lot of currency in policy circles and a number of scholars have argued that the nature of warfare has changed. The argument holds “during the last decades of the twentieth century, a new type of organized violence developed;” thus, modern violent conflicts are qualitatively different from earlier forms of conflict (Kaldor 2006: 1). The second part of the dissertation provides a literature review and analyses the main arguments of the new war debate. In doing so, this dissertation looks at the international structures, spatial context, state failure, new globalised economy, actors, motives, methods of warfare, root causes, objectives and victimisation of civilians that characterise new wars. This dissertation argues that the new war thesis has offered a number of interesting insights into the social and economic dynamics of civil war. Moreover, the robust methodology of the new war thesis provides researchers with a useful framework for analysing violent conflict.

However, the drawback of the new war thesis is the erroneous assumption of the novelty of new wars. This dissertation argues that the new war thesis reflects a shift in scholars understating of civil war, rather than a complete shift in the nature of warfare.

The third part of this dissertation puts the usefulness of the new war theory to the test. Thus, this dissertation applies the theoretical arguments of the new war thesis to case studies of civil war that emerged in the twentieth and the twenty-first century. The empirical research of this dissertation refutes the new war's argument about the novelty of new wars. Moreover, this dissertation shows that not all civil wars fit the theoretical framework of new war thesis. Bosnia is the quintessential example of a new war. Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Congo, Darfur, Iraq, Liberia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia are also examples of new wars. However, the cases of the violence in the Basque country, Chechnya, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka cannot be explained fully in terms of new wars. Therefore, this dissertation argues that the new wars thesis enhances our understanding of the dynamics and the nature of a number of contemporary civil wars. However, the new war thesis cannot be applied to every case of civil war because wars are unique – a reflection of the uniqueness of countries. The most valuable aspect of the new war theory is that it changes scholars and politicians' perception of modern violent conflicts.

The fourth part of the dissertation analyses the implications of the new war thesis for scholarship and policy. The new war thesis has significant implications for scholarship in terms of methodology, security discourse, human security and multi-disciplinary analysis. The new war thesis also has significant implications for policy analysis and policy design. One of the key implications of the new war thesis reflects on the nature of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in volatile environments. The main argument is that both scholars and

politicians need to engage with the new war debate in order to attain a better understanding of the causes, factors, actors, objectives, economic and social aspects that lead to civil wars.

# Conflict Analysis

The aim of this dissertation is to engage with the new wars debate and to study its implications for scholarship and policy. However, before engaging with this debate, this dissertation concentrates on the broad field of conflict analysis. This is necessary in order to create a better understanding of the nature of contemporary violent conflict and the policies that help to predict and prevent it.

In recent years a number of scholars have argued that a new pattern of violence has developed and that the number of interstate conflicts has decreased, while the number of intrastate conflicts has increased. The magnitude of the shift in the mode of warfare is demonstrated by the fact that since 1945 interstate wars have killed approximately three million people, while civil wars have killed approximately twenty million and displaced about sixty-seven million people (Collier & Sambanis 2005: xiii; Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75). The horrific effect of civil wars on humanity has impelled scholars to study the nature and dynamics of civil wars. Different scholars have developed a plethora of theories analysing intrastate conflict. This dissertation differentiates between quantitative and qualitative approaches to conflict analysis, and it explores their methodological limitations and weaknesses. One of the main drawbacks of quantitative studies of violent conflict is that they rely on questionable raw data. Collecting data from war torn states is very challenging as data is often unreliable and sometimes nonexistent. Moreover, raw data is subject to interpretation and biased scholars or policy makers can manipulate raw data in order to produce specific results that suit their agenda. Thus, the patterns and trends of violence identified by potentially biased quantitative empirical studies do not always stand up to scrutiny. In

comparison, anthropological studies of conflict analysis base their findings on qualitative analysis of the social, political and economic factors that lead to the onset of violent conflict. The drawback of such analysis is that it is case specific and while it is very useful in explaining the specific instances of violent conflict, it does not have cross-country relevance. This dissertation argues that in order to overcome the methodological problems of the existing approaches to conflict analysis, scholars need to develop a combined approach based on reliable empirical data, recognising the nuances in case specific conflicts and providing valid information about patterns and trends of violent conflict that can be applied in cross-country analysis. Bearing this in mind, this dissertation looks at different definitions and approaches to conflict analysis and discusses the methodological problems associated with them<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The aim of a number of conflict analysis studies is to define and codify civil war. Some scholars employ a critical approach to security and challenge the ontological and epistemological assumption of the traditional approaches to conflict analysis. However, the majority of scholars employ the empirical approach in their analysis of the causes, trends, patterns and effects of conflict. This dissertation concentrates mainly on the empirical approaches to conflict analysis.

# Methodological Problems of Quantitative Approaches to Conflict Analysis

A number of the empirical studies are large sample quantitative observations on the nature of civil war. A quintessential example of a large-N study is the Correlates of War (COW) project. COW is one of the most influential studies of conflict and it has significant implications for scholarship and policy. The COW definition of civil war is adopted without any modifications or by scholars like Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and Walter (2002). Other scholars like Mason and Fett (1996) and Fearon and Laitin (2003) only make minor changes to the COW definition. COW codifies civil war as “any armed conflict that involved a) military action internal to the metropole of the state system member, b) the active participation of the national government, and c) effective resistance by both sides (as measured by the ratio of fatalities of the weaker to the stronger forces), and d) a total of at least 1,000 battle deaths during each year of the war” (Sarkees & Schafer 2000: 126).

Another prominent example of a large-N quantitative study is the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), whose findings are adopted by the Human Security Report. UCDP recognises the importance of the 1,000 battle deaths threshold for civil wars with a higher intensity level; however, it defines armed conflict as a “contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (Wallensteen & Sollenberg 2001: 643).

A third example of an influential large-N conflict analysis study is the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) project. The PITF classifies civil war as a state failure problem “wherein each party must mobilize 1,000 or more people (armed agents, demonstrators, troops), and ... whereby there must be at least 1,000 direct conflict-related deaths over the full course of the armed conflict and at least one year when the annual conflict-related death toll exceeds 100 fatalities” (PITF 2009)<sup>2</sup>.

One of the methodological problems of these quantitative studies is that they base their findings about the causes, nature and duration of civil war on numerical data and event identification thresholds. Sambanis (2004: 815) favours the use of numerical thresholds because arguably they help to distinguish civil war from other types of violent conflict. This is an interesting argument because distinguishing civil war from other types of violent conflict could improve scholars’ understanding of the nature of civil war and could help develop more effective policies for prediction and prevention of civil war. However, the problem with empirical methodologies based on numerical thresholds is that they rely heavily on raw data from weak and unstable states. Data concerning the onset and duration of civil wars is unreliable because the majority of civil wars erupt in extremely poor and weak states that do not prioritise the collection of accurate statistical data. Added to that is the unreliability of reports about the number of combatants and victims in civil wars because such reports are often used as propaganda or justification for the implementation of violence,

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<sup>2</sup> All three datasets – COW, UCDP and PITF – define and codify civil war in a slightly different manner. This is problematic because it hinders the construction of a valid and effective operational definition of civil war. This has serious implications for scholarship and policy as it allows for confusion and lack of clear direction in academic research and policy analysis.

humanitarian intervention, or lack of action<sup>3</sup>. The significant discrepancies in the findings of a number of studies show that even the most advanced empirical methodologies are constrained by the raw data that they draw on, and, therefore, their findings are questionable. The findings of conflict analysis studies based purely on numerical thresholds can be disputed because the reliability of the numerical data from war torn states is debatable.

Another methodological problem of quantitative empirical studies is the affirmation of numerical trends. Identifying exactly 25, 100 or 1,000 battle deaths – the event identification thresholds suggested by COW, UCDP or PITF – is challenging because it lies on the assumption that there is a clear distinction between battle related deaths and other type of deaths. Similarly, identifying a mobilization threshold of a 1,000 participants (PITF) is problematic because it presumes that the distinction between combatants and civilians is evident. Such distinctions between battle related deaths and natural deaths and between combatants and non-combatants are typical for the conventional understanding of warfare. However, in the context of contemporary violent conflict, weakened states and soaring levels of crime, the “distinction between combatant deaths and victims of criminal violence is inevitably blurred” (Newman 2009: 262). Moreover, the distinction between legitimate actors and armed thugs or unscrupulous marauders who participate in civil wars is nearly impossible (Mueller 2000: 43). Therefore, the use of numerical trends in conflict analysis and large-N

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<sup>3</sup> For example, different sources identify different number of casualties in the Rwandan genocide. Only a week after the start of the genocide, RTLM – the radio station that broadcasted the genocide – “congratulated its listeners” for killing approximately 20,000 Tutsis in Kigali and “urged them to keep up their good efforts” (Article 19 1996: 69). RTLM’s broadcast reported such number of victims in order to fuel its propaganda machine and to drive more Hutus into the killing spree. During the genocide, the Human Rights Watch and Medecins Sans Frontiere also reported high number of casualties, respectively 100,000 and 200,000, urging the international community to take action against the crimes against humanity (Verpoorten 2005: 332). Nevertheless, the US chose not to intervene and justified its inaction by claiming that it did not have sufficient information and “did not fully appreciate the depth and speed with which [Rwandans] were being engulfed” by the genocide (Carroll 2004). Recent numerical data about the number of victims of the Rwandan genocide is also questionable. According to the official UN report, “approximately 800,000 people were killed during the 1994 genocide” (Carlsson, Sung-Joo & Kupolati 1999: 3). According to the census carried out by the Rwandan government in 2001, the death toll reached 937,000 (Asiimwe 2004). However, according to large statistical projects such as COW and UCDP, the death toll reached approximately 500,000 (Sarkees 2000; UCDP 2008).

studies can lead to spurious conclusions about the nature of warfare, the number of victims and the type and number of mobilized actors.

A further methodological problem with quantitative studies of civil wars is that they identify questionable trends about the spatial context of conflict. The majority of empirical studies define civil war as an intrastate conflict. However, a more detailed analysis of the underlying political, social and economic conditions of conflict suggests that civil wars are not limited by the boundaries of the state. To the contrary, civil wars are regional or extrasystemic conflicts (Kaldor 2006: 12). For example, it is problematic to discuss the disturbances that affected Liberia from 1989 to 2003 in terms of an intrastate conflict. Liberia is better described as a regional conflict (Newman 2009: 262). Conflicts like Rwanda also cannot be explained in terms of intrastate conflict because of Rwanda's economic, political and military connections with neighbouring and far away countries such as Zaire, Congo, France and Belgium for example. Therefore, quantitative studies based on the assumption that civil wars occur within the borders of a single country must be treated carefully because their findings about the patterns and trends of the number of civil wars that they generate can be misleading.

Another methodological problem of a number of quantitative studies of conflict is that they codify civil war through the participation of the national governments. Scholars such as Singer (1996), Sarkees and Schafer (2003) and datasets such as COW, PITF and UCDP define civil wars as a conflict that necessarily involves governmental forces. This methodological assumption is questionable because modern conflicts often occur in failed states where the official governments lose their authority and legitimate power. Moreover, failed states challenge the distinction between government and non-government forces and

between public and private combatants; therefore, the participants in civil conflict are not always identifiable with national governments (Newman 2009: 263). Mueller (2000: 42) concurs with this trend and argues that the plethora of actors in contemporary civil wars, such as Bosnia, comprises of “bands of opportunistic marauders recruited by political leaders and operating under their general guidance,” “street gangs... bands... and criminals specifically released from prison” by political leaders in order to take part in the violent disturbances.

As a result of the methodological problems associated with large sample empirical studies of civil war, doubts about the validity and reliability of the trends and patterns of violence begin to emerge. Since reliable raw data from war torn states is hard to obtain and codification of civil war relying on numerical trends and event identification thresholds is problematic, “it is a better methodological strategy to explain violent conflict in terms of specific social, political and economic events rather than the number of casualties” or the number of participants involved in conflict (Sambanis 2004: 816; cf. Goldstone et al. 2005).

# Methodological Problems of Case Studies and Qualitative Approaches to Conflict Analysis

A number of conflict analysis studies are not interested in large sample quantitative analysis. Such conflict analysis studies concentrate on the qualitative characteristics of conflict and codify civil war in terms of social, political and economic events. One of the methodological challenges associated with case studies and anthropological approaches to conflict analysis is that their findings do not always have cross-country relevance (Newman 2009: 259). A number of scholars like Bennett (1995), Zimmermann (1996), Snyder and Ballentine (1996), Malcolm (1998) and Mueller (2000) produce extremely interesting and provocative insights into the nature of the war in Bosnia. They identify the key variables and causes of the violent struggle that swept across Bosnia and the Balkans. However, their analysis is limited to a specific incidence of civil war and it cannot be used effectively in cross-country analysis because “countries – and thus conflicts – are unique” (Newman 2009: 259). The uniqueness of countries and conflicts hinders the identification and evaluation of variables across conflicts occurring in different political, economic and geographic contexts.

Moreover, a number of methodological approaches that employ qualitative characteristics in their codification of civil war rely on simplistic analysis of presence or absence of certain factors associated with violent conflict (Newman 2009: 259). Such factors include ethnic diversity, fluid political identity, political instability, decline of state legitimacy, struggle for

power and resources, weak local policing, opportunities for looting and plunder, income inequality, unemployment, high levels of criminal activity, divide between urban and rural communities and so on. The underlying problem of such simple analysis is that it bases its findings about the trends, patterns and factors leading to violent conflict on wrong premises. Even if the same factors are present in a number of different conflicts that does not mean that their relative importance and the nature of their interactions are the same. For example, it is problematic to claim that if civil war has erupted in a country with high ethnic diversity, failing economy and weak local policing, a civil war would also erupt in another country that shares the same social, economic and political characteristics (Newman 2009: 259).

Furthermore, anthropological approaches to conflict analysis often identify extreme poverty as a major cause of intrastate conflict. Indeed, the majority of war torn states are really poor and the data from the Human Development Index shows that by 2009 all of the ten poorest countries in the world have experienced civil wars. However, by 2000 only eight of the ten poorest countries have experienced civil wars. Niger, Sierra Leone, Mali, Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Burundi and Mozambique had been torn by violent conflict, while Burkina Faso and Chad had not (Stewart 2000: 252). This empirical data affirms the argument that the interaction of different social and economic factors can catalyse or counter the eruption of violent conflict (Newman 2009: 259). In other words, poverty and income inequality do not simply equal civil war. Frances Stewart argues that in order to analyse the importance of poverty as a root cause of civil war, scholars need to look at vertical and horizontal inequalities. The majority of studies of conflict analysis measure only vertical inequality or inequalities between individuals. In order to enhance the validity of conflict analysis studies scholars need to look at horizontal inequalities or inequalities between groups formed on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, wealth, political background, depending on the most

relevant group identification feature of the society (Stewart 2000: 253). What gives advantage to empirical methodologies that recognise the importance of horizontal inequalities is their awareness of all dimensions of inequality. Vertical inequality proves to be an unsatisfactory explanation of the onset and nature of violent conflict because a number of societies experience vertical inequalities without experiencing horizontal inequalities or violent conflicts (Stewart 2000: 253). For example, Thailand has experienced sharp vertical income inequalities without experiencing horizontal inequalities or violent civil conflicts. Thus, dismissing the utility and explanatory power of horizontal inequalities weakens the explanatory power of a number of conflict analysis studies. Sophisticated conflict analysis studies employ horizontal inequality analysis and show that societies characterised by insignificant horizontal inequalities and sharp vertical inequalities are far less likely to experience a civil war than societies characterised by sharp horizontal inequalities and moderate vertical inequalities.

A further problem of qualitative empirical methodologies is that they do not have absolute reliability in terms of explaining the nature of civil wars and even less so in terms of predicting it. A number of the conflict analysis studies, including some that have significant implications for scholarship and policy, actually contradict one another when explaining the causes of civil war. Some studies suggest that political grievances, such as lack of political rights or severe inequalities, are the key to understanding the causes of civil war (Alao & Olonisakin 2000). Other studies play down the role of grievances and argue that greed and atypical opportunities for rebellion have greater explanatory power in conflict analysis (Collier & Hoeffler 2004). Certain studies emphasise the role of the political regime type and suggest that liberal regimes are more prone to violent conflict (Gladstone et al. 2005). Conversely, other studies find that political liberalisation reduces the risk of violent conflict

(Elbadawi & Sambanis 2002). A number of studies identify religious or ethnic identity as the most important variable in conflict analysis (Reynal-Querol 2002; Gurr, Woodward & Marshall 2005). However, different studies assert that the relationship between violent conflict and ethnic or religious identity is non-monotonic and social identity is only important as an ordering device in civil wars (Collier & Hoeffler 1998; Mueller 2000; Fearon & Laitin 2003). Another study indicates the importance of environmental factors in conflict analysis (Bennett 1991); however, its findings are reputed by a later study that does not find a casual relationship between environmental scarcity and violent conflict (Fairhead 2000). A more recent study analyses of the role of environmental factors such as natural resources in violent conflict and points out that “it is people that kill people, not resources” (Le Billon 2005: 8). This study explains that the role of valuable resources is to “create a context in which a country’s vulnerability to armed conflict is enhanced” and to “shape the opportunities available to would-be belligerents” (Le Billon 2005: 8). Certain studies advance the idea that the leader’s potential and charisma have a large role to play in the organisation and onset of violent conflict (Grossman 1999). Even though other studies recognise the importance of charisma as one of the variables in conflict analysis, they argue that charisma and personal motivations are not quantifiable and therefore have less explanatory power in conflict analysis (Newman 2009). The majority of empirical studies that analyse civil war concentrate on domestic factors and variables. However, some studies explain the onset and nature of civil wars with reference to the international system, the balance of power theories and power transition theories (Levy 1998; Hironaka 2005). The problem with all these different approaches to conflict analysis is that they fail to generate an operational definition and explanation of the nature of violent conflict. Studying the causes of violent conflict is certainly very interesting; however, the findings are only applicable to case specific research. Since social, political and geographical settings of conflicts are different, the causes of

conflicts are also usually different. Therefore, applying the analysis of the root causes of a specific conflict to cross-country analysis is problematic and should be avoided.

# Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Conflict Analysis

The various limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches to conflict analysis fleshed out in this dissertation accentuate the need for the development of a combined approach to conflict analysis. The lack of an operational definition and unified analysis of the onset, nature and duration of violent conflict has had an adverse impact on policy making. Thus, developing a more effective methodological approach to conflict analysis should be a key objective of scholarship. Such methodological approach should be based on reliable and verifiable raw data to abate the limitations of quantitative research methods. It should also have cross-country relevance to minimize the limitations of qualitative research methods. Most importantly, the combined approach to conflict analysis should be able to explain the nature of violent conflict, as well as the economic, social and political dynamics of conflict. The new wars approach is one of the recently developed approaches to conflict analysis that fulfils a number of these requirements.

# The New Wars Debate

In recent years, a number of scholars have engaged with conflict analysis and have suggested that the international system is undergoing a profound transformation. This transformation has been shaped by the end of the Cold War, the spread of globalisation and the emergence of new patterns of cooperation and conflict among state and non-state actors. This transformation has arguably triggered the development of a new breed of warfare that is qualitatively different from earlier forms of warfare. The argument holds that “during the last decades of the twentieth century, a new type of organized violence developed, especially in Africa and Eastern Europe” (Kaldor 2006: 1, cf. Snow 1996: 1). This new form of violence has been defined by the term new wars. The introduction of the term new wars to conflict analysis has impelled scholars to re-evaluate the conventional war theories and to explore the nature of war from a new perspective.

Most scholars that theorise about armed conflict from a new war perspective study a number of social, political and economic factors<sup>4</sup> that help them to identify common trends in contemporary conflicts. It is pertinent to note that in this dissertation the term “new wars” does not refer to the work of a single author, but to a wide body of literature that suggests that the nature of warfare has changed. This is not to say that all scholars define and explain the

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<sup>4</sup> Exploring the nature of war requires studying the different factors that characterise wars. Newman (2004: 174) identifies six main factors of conflict analysis. The first main factor of conflict analysis is the participants in war – nation states or non-state actors, public or private actors, warlords, criminals or terrorists. The second factor is the spatial context – the international, regional or interstate setting of war. The third factor is the root causes of war – ethnical diversity, political identity, income inequality, criminal activity or state failure. The fourth factor is the actors’ motives – political ideology, grievance, greed, government control or territorial secession. The fifth factor is the methods of violence – the use of technology, training and military tactics. The sixth factor is the social and human impact of conflict – human displacement, terrorising and murder of civilians and non-combatants. This is not a list of all the variables in conflict analysis; however, this list includes the most important factors that help scholars understand and explain the nature of war.

nature of war in the same manner; however, there are some common patterns that have been identified by scholars who support the new wars thesis. For example, most of the literature suggests that the number of intrastate conflicts has decreased, while the number of interstate conflicts has increased<sup>5</sup>; hence, new wars are described as civil wars or internal conflicts (Kaldor 2006: 2, Kalyvas 2001: 99, Newman 2004: 174, Snow 1996: ix). According to the literature, new wars are characterised by state failure caused by macro-societal and economic factors such as demographic pressures, movements of refugees, economic decline, criminalisation of the state, loss of the monopoly of legitimate use of force, violation of human rights and rise in paramilitary groups and private armies (Fund for Peace 2009). In new wars, social factors, such as ethnicity and religion, have become more important than political factors, such as ideology (Huntington 1993). The victims of modern wars are civilians, including women and children, and they are targeted deliberately. Genocide and ethnic cleansing have become trademarks of new wars (Porto 2002). The number of civilians and displaced people has grown as a proportion of all casualties in recent violent conflicts (Newman 2004). Moreover, the blurred distinction between public and private combatants, warlords, criminals and common thugs has become a common trait of modern violent conflicts (Kaldor 2006: 6).

The new wars thesis provides a number of interesting insights for the study of violent conflict. It also provides an effective methodology for analysing the nature, dynamics, social and economic aspects of conflict. However, the drawback of the new war thesis is that it identifies dubious trends of the changing nature of violence. Indeed, the claim that new wars are fundamentally different from old wars is problematic, especially when juxtaposed to

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<sup>5</sup>In the second edition of the book *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, Kaldor (2006: vii) notes that “there has actually been a decline in the number of wars in the world and a decline in the number of people killed in wars.” Moreover, Kaldor (2006: viii) suggests that “the first five years of the twenty-first century [have] probably [been] one of the most peaceful half decades in history.”

historical data from earlier wars. This chapter summarises the key arguments of the new war literature and argues that the weakness of new war theory is not in its analysis of violent conflict, but in exaggerating the novelty of new wars. The aim of this chapter is to understand whether the nature of conflict has changed or our analysis of war has changed. The main argument of this chapter is that both wars and scholars' understanding of wars have changed; however the change in the depth and quality of the analysis is much greater than the change in the nature of war (Newman 2004: 185).

# The New Wars Thesis – Literature Review

The new war thesis arguably reflects a new reality where modern conflicts are qualitatively different from earlier forms of conflicts. This chapter reviews the main arguments of the new war thesis and looks at international structures, the spatial context, the state failure, the new globalised economy, the actors, the methods of warfare, the root causes, the objectives and the victimisation of civilians that characterise new wars. This chapter argues that the new war thesis is based on a robust methodology that provides some valid, interesting and useful explanations of the nature of violent conflict; however, the problem with the new war thesis is that it exaggerates the novelty of the features of contemporary violent conflicts.

In terms of the international structures, the new war thesis suggests that the current international system is divided into two distinct parts. Buzan and Little refer to these distinct parts as “zone of peace” and “zone of conflict,” Singer and Wildavsky prefer the terms “zone of peace” and “zone of turmoil,” while Snow calls them “First Tier” and “Second Tier” (Jung 2003: 11; Snow 1996: 11). Even though scholars use different terminology, they imply the same meaning: the “zone of peace” encompasses developed capitalist countries and the “zone of conflict” comprises of the rest of the world, which is more susceptible to external and internal violence. The two zones formula is a manifestation of the observation that the international structures have been transformed after the end of the Cold War. It is often argued that the demise of the Soviet Union and the totalitarian regimes, the retraction of superpower support, the power vacuum, the demeaning of socialist ideologies and the accessibility of surplus weaponry have triggered the development of a inherently new type of warfare (Kaldor 2006, 4; Snow 1996:1). This new type of warfare has challenged utility of the mainstream theory of international relations (Jung 2003: 11).

The classical model of Westphalian order is no longer effective for describing the spatial context of new wars. According to the new wars argument, “the spatial context of contemporary wars is generally within, rather than between states” (Newman 2004: 175). A number of scholars concur that in the last two decades the number of interstate wars has decreased, while the number of intrastate wars has increased (Fearon and Latin 2003: 75; ICISS 2004: 4; Kaldor 2006: 2; Kalyvas 2001: 99; Münkler 2005: 14; Newman 2004: 174; Snow 1996: 1). Thus, new wars are often described as civil wars or localised conflicts, even though they are associated with multiple regional and transnational processes. The complexity of the spatial context of new wars blurs the distinction between local and global settings and between repression (internal violence) and aggression (international confrontation). Moreover, the spatial context of new wars is not limited to a specific battlefield or war sector. Clausewitz’s idea of “the real centre of gravity of War” is arguably no longer valid for the analysis of modern conflict (Kaldor 2006: 12). Modern conflicts could break out anywhere –in big cities or small villages, in mountainous terrains, in churches, in schools, on crossroads – the protagonists of war are no longer contained within a battlefield, but they are dispersed across the state. This has disastrous consequences for civilians and the state.

The weakening of the state is another characteristic of new wars. Scholars have studied the plethora of military, political, social and economic changes occurring in weakened states, and they have argued that such changes could lead to the “retreat of the state” (Strange 1996) or the “debordering the world states” (Albert and Brock 1996). A number of scholars associate state failure with the loss of the monopoly over the means of violence (Jung 2003: 12; Münkler 2005: 16). According to the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, when the “state’s monopoly over the means of violence is lost... violence becomes a way of life with catastrophic consequences for civilians caught in crossfire”

(ICISS 2004: 4). Therefore, the failure of the state has severe implications for the wellbeing and safety of civilians. Moreover, political factors – such as the criminalization of the state, the breach of human rights, the progressive development of identity politics, the deterioration of public services and the rise of paramilitary groups – that are featured in modern violent conflicts, contribute to the pervasive loss of confidence in the competence of national institutions. The weakening of the state is also caused by social factors, typical for societies where violent conflicts prevail, such as demographic pressures, drastic population growth, food shortages, lack of water, forced displacement of refugees, scapegoating of ethnical or religious groups, disputes over the use of land and natural resources. The weakening of the state, seen in the context of economic factors – such as globalisation, decline in GDP, falling trade revenue, development of hidden economies and black markets, growing debt and uneven distribution of wealth – are also presages of violent conflict (Newman, 2004: 175; Kaldor 2006: 5; Fund for Peace 2009).

The new war literature suggests that economic factors are key to understanding modern conflict. Globalisation in particular is an essential component of the political economy of new wars. Globalisation as a term represents “the intensification of global interconnectedness – political, economic, military and cultural – and the changing character of political authority” (Kaldor 2006: 6; cf. Jung 2003: 2). In the context of new wars, globalisation is responsible for three processes. First, globalisation underpins the process of deterioration of state authority, worsening provision of public goods and increased social vulnerability. Within this context, globalisation allows non-state actors to compete for control over state power and resources. Such competition blurs the distinction between private and public authority and allows for rise in corruption, privatization of violence and, in extreme cases, criminalization of the state (Kaldor 2006: 6; Cilliers & Mason, 1999). Second, globalization creates

economic incentives in civil wars because of increased opportunities for legal and illegal transborder trade (Newman 2004: 177). The new war literature argues that trade and monetary incentives generated by globalisation often fuel violent conflicts. Since a number of modern violent conflicts have occurred in desperately poor states characterised by high levels of inflation, unemployment, corruption and criminality, globalisation has arguably catalysed the emergence of greedy paramilitary groups and the development of an “economy of robbery and plunder” (Münkler 2005: 14). Third, globalisation is closely connected to a process of rapid technological development. The revolution in information technology has made global communication possible and has raised awareness of violent conflict across the globe (ICISS 2001: 6). The result is the increased involvement of international journalists, international agencies, military advisers, armed troops and volunteers such as the UN, EU, UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, Medecins Sans Frontieres and the International Red Cross (Kaldor 2006: 5). The impact of globalisation on contemporary violent conflicts is so strong that the term globalised war economy<sup>6</sup> is often employed in conflict analysis. The globalised war economy implies that “fighting units finance themselves through plunder and the black market or through external assistance” (Newman 2004: 176). Thus, contemporary armed conflicts show that the effects of globalisation are “compatible with regional and local structures of violence” (Jung 2003:10).

The new war literature suggests that the context of globalisation and state failure implicates a number of state and non-state actors and leads to a process of privatisation of violence. The main protagonists in contemporary conflict are no longer limited to national armies. They comprise a plethora of “insurgency groups, criminal gangs, diaspora groups, ethnic parties, international aid organisations, and mercenaries, as well as regular armies” (Newman 2004:

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1 for a more detailed explanation of the float of resources in a globalised war economy.

175, cf. Kalyvas 2001: 102-3). The diversity of the actors involved in contemporary conflicts leads to a pervasive collapse of morale and discipline of the armed groups to the extent that “soldiers become looters for whom the laws of war or any kind of military code of punishment no longer enter the picture” (Münkler 2005: 14). Within this context of multiple violent participants in new wars, the warlords have a special place. Warlords are armed combatants who employ violent force in a fight for control over the illegal war economy or over an area of territory (Duffield 2001: 14; Kalyvas 2001: 105). The distinction between warlords, paramilitary groups, common thugs and legitimate arm bearers is often distorted in new wars (Kaldor 2006: 6). The rise of power and number of rebels against state authority and legitimacy is due to failure of the state, the declining economy, the liberal economic forces of globalisation, the high unemployment, the ethnic or social incompatibility, the growing social vulnerability and the increased criminal opportunities.

The character of the main protagonists in new wars determines the character of the mode of warfare. Unlike earlier forms of conflict, new wars are characterised by guerrilla warfare (Kaldor 2006: 8; Zahar 2001: 45). Such form of warfare has developed in order to avoid the need for massive concentrations of armed forces which are typical for earlier wars. Moreover, guerrilla warfare is not limited to the area of a battlefield, but it is spread around a region and it involves a multitude of state and non-state actors, including marginalised soldiers, teenage hooligans and even children soldiers (Kalyvas 2001: 103). This is a departure from the conventional mode of warfare because international wars are usually characterised by set battlefields where the professional armies and the legitimate soldiers meet in order to fight. Another departure from the traditional mode of warfare is the use of technology, in particular the use of cheap, highly destructive weapons by combatants (ICISS 2004: 4; Snow 1996: 81). The type of weapons used in modern violent conflicts reflects the type of combatants.

Belligerents do not necessarily have access to the legitimate channels for trade of weapons. Therefore, they rely on the provisions of the black market and the proliferation of cheap and accessible weapons. It is important to note that in the context of modern armed conflicts, the controlling the trade of weapons is extremely challenging and weapons find their way into the hands of child soldiers which has disastrous consequences for the type and number of victims of civil wars (ICISS 2004: 4).

Before analysing the type of victims in contemporary civil wars, it is important to examine the root causes of violent conflict and the objectives of the belligerents. Indeed, these characteristics of civil war are interconnected and understanding every single one of them helps understanding the whole. A number of scholars have engaged with the analysis of the root causes of new wars and arrived at different conclusions. Some argue that geopolitics and territorial disputes are among the most common causes of civil wars. Others argue that the social and economic environment in shadow states define the causes of civil wars. Kaldor (2006: 6), Newman (2004: 177) and Snow (1996: 57) suggest that the causes of contemporary wars can be explained in terms of identity politics or economic motives. Reno (2000: 54) emphasises the significance of economic motives and proposes that modern conflicts are caused by the intensification of international trade and the growing greed of rebels pursuing “enterprise in a strikingly violent manner.” Mueller (2000: 49) reiterates the attractiveness of robbery and looting for rising rebel forces and asserts that fighting the political enemy or ideology is irrelevant in the analysis of contemporary violent conflict. De Soysa (2000: 114) engages with the debate about the role of natural resources in the development of conflict and takes the argument further by claiming that greed-motivated rebellions are fuelled by the “resource curse.” Jung (2003: 12) puts forward the idea that “mafia-style economies and protracted internal warfare are often the result of international

intervention.” This argument is out of the ordinary as it challenges the conventional understanding of the benefits of foreign aid and implies that humanitarian aid is responsible for sustaining the criminalised war economy. Nevertheless, one of the most interesting and provocative studies of civil war questions the analysis of civil wars in terms of motives as and creates an analogy between the causes of violent crimes and violent conflicts. Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 563) argue that rebellion, similar to murder, “needs both motive and opportunity.” Collier and Hoeffler critique the conflict analysis literature which describes civil war in terms of social and economic motives. They assert that studies which incorporate the analysis of opportune circumstances for rebellion are more reliable because even though a number of societies experience severe grievances, an obvious motive for violent conflict, only the ones that exhibit atypical profitable opportunities for rebellions experience civil wars.

The motive-opportunity dichotomy ties in with the analysis of the objectives the belligerents implicated in contemporary violent conflicts. It is a common misconception to theorise about belligerents’ objectives in terms of a political agenda. Political issues such as social inequality, racial hatred or religious conflict are predominantly used by belligerents to promote their cause and to gain the support of a targeted social group (Mueller 2000: 75). Most of the new war literature shows that “economic motives and greed are the primary underlying driving forces of violent conflict” (Newman 2004: 177; Keen 1998: 11; Berdal & Malone 2000: 3; Kalyvas 2001: 102-103; Duffield 2001: 14; Kaldor 2006: 7). The former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan articulates that the plunder of valuable resources, such as drugs, diamonds, minerals and timber is the driving force in most civil wars (Kalyvas 2001: 103). Some scholars make a distinction between the short and the long term objectives of civil wars. In the short term, the objectives revolve around the capture of resources and the

development of trade relations, both legal and illegal. In the long term, the objectives involve the deterioration of the legitimate state authority and the growth of black markets and illegal economies in which profits and violence are interconnected (Münkler 2005: 14). Therefore, it is not surprising that belligerents prefer the continuation of violence to a military or political win. The environment of contemporary violent conflict shows that ending a civil war is problematic because the “point of war may be precisely the legitimacy which it confers on actions that in peacetime would be punishable as crimes (Newman 2004: 177).

Since the combatants’ objective is to prolong civil wars and to continue the violence, it is not surprising that violence is essentially directed against the civilians rather than the military forces. The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (1997: 11) and the ICISS (2004: 4) identify a worrying trend of modern civil wars; belligerent deliberately target the civilian population and “in some wars today, 90 percent of those killed in conflict are non-combatants, compared with less than 15 percent when the century began.” Chesterman (2001:2); Newman (2004: 178), Münkler (2005: 14) and Kaldor (2006: 100) concur with this general trend. It appears that the involvement of child soldiers, forced displacement, systematic use of sexual violence, predation and annihilation of social, religious or ethnic groups have become an indispensable part of the insignia of new wars. Snow (1995: ix) draws attention to the violent conflicts that swept across Liberia, Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda and shows belligerents were not fighting one another, instead they were passing the organised terrorising and murdering of civilians for military action. As a result of the deliberate victimization of civilians twenty one million of people have been killed and sixty seven million have been permanently displaced since 1945 (Collier & Sambanis 2005: xiii;

Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75). These statistics are extremely worrying and they require the attention of scholars and policy makers<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 2 for statistics of the number of “victims” of violent conflict from 2002 to 2007.

# How “New” are New Wars?

The proliferation of the new war thesis has encouraged scholars and policy makers to engage with the debate about the nature, dynamics, patterns and trends of contemporary warfare. A number of the contemporary violent conflicts have been classified as new wars. The quintessential example is Bosnia. Other examples from the last two decades include Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Congo, Darfur, Liberia, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Somalia among others. The new war literature improves scholars and practitioners’ understanding of the dynamics of conflict, the social and economic aspects of war and the intrinsic relationship between development and security. The new wars thesis provides valid and detailed analysis of the international structures of the post-Cold War world, the spatial context of war, the decline of the nation states, the development of the globalised war economy, the motives and the objectives of the different participants in war, the victimization of civilians and the overall impact of war on individual, societal and national level. The major problem of the new war thesis is that a number of its findings are not new. Indeed, Newman (2004: 185) argues that “all the factors that characterise new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years.” This dissertation concurs with Newman (2004) and argues that it is important to distinguish between changes in the reality of wars and changes in scholars’ perception and analysis of war. It appears that both reality and scholars’ perception of war have changed; however, conflict analysis has undergone a much greater qualitative transformation. The reason behind the qualitative transformation of conflict analysis is that scholars, analysts and practitioners now have a wider access to information through international media and the internet. Moreover, they have developed a

better empirical understanding of the nature and dynamics of violent conflict and underlying social, economic and developmental factors that instigate or impede the eruption of war.

# Putting Theory to the Test - A Critical Evaluation of the Utility of the New War Thesis

The new war thesis has gained a lot of currency in academic circles. However, this dissertation evaluates the utility and validity of the new war thesis and argues that even though the new war thesis has enhanced our knowledge of the social and economic dynamics of contemporary civil war, the new war thesis has identified some erroneous trends of change in the nature of warfare, which diminish its legitimacy. In order to assess the usefulness of the new wars thesis, this dissertation employs a methodology that analyses its strengths and weaknesses by rigorously applying its arguments to cases of violent conflict from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and the Middle East, from the twentieth and the twenty-first century. One of the strengths of the new war thesis is that it enhances our understanding of the social and economic dynamics of civil war. The new war thesis puts forward a number of compelling arguments about the participants in civil war and their motives, the failure of the state, the role of globalisation, the resource curse, the decline of the economy, the rise of identity politics and the victimisation of civilians. The empirical research of this dissertation shows that the new war thesis provides a rigorous framework that explains a number of contemporary violent conflicts. However, the weakness of the new war thesis is that its main argument about the novelty of new wars does not stand up to scrutiny, especially when juxtaposed to historical data. Another weakness of the new war thesis is that it indicates a downward trend of the number of intrastate wars and an upward trend in the number of

interstate wars. This is problematic because the number and typology of violent conflicts depends on the different definitions of conflict employed by different scholars. The empirical analysis of this dissertation suggests that the fluctuations in the patterns of violence and the nature of war do not fit a linear trend. The strengths and the weaknesses of the new wars thesis have significant implications for scholarship and policy. Scholars and practitioners in the fields of politics and security have to engage critically with the new wars debate until the debate boils down to effective strategies and policies for conflict prediction, prevention, resolution and reconciliation.

# The Utility (or Futility) of the New War Thesis

According to Newman (2004: 186), the new war thesis “has done a great service in deepening understanding of civil war.” This is due to the fact that the new wars methodology provides an effective framework for analysing the social, economic and political factors that shape the nature of contemporary civil wars.

In order to test the utility of the new war thesis, this dissertation looks at twenty cases of civil wars that erupted in five different geographic regions – the Americas, Africa, Asia<sup>8</sup>, Europe<sup>9</sup> and the Middle East – in the twentieth and twenty-first century<sup>10</sup>. The cases are chosen specifically to reflect different geographic and temporal contexts in order to test the global relevance and historical validity of the new war thesis. The case studies are also chosen to reflect the nuances of specific instances of civil war in order to show that conflicts, as well as countries, are unique, and general theories about the nature of conflict do not stand up to scrutiny.

This dissertation employs case study analysis rather than large sample statistical analysis because of three main reasons. Firstly, case studies facilitate more detailed analysis of ordinary and idiosyncratic examples of violent conflict. Secondly, case studies relate theory to real life experiences and show whether academic theory effectively translates into policy. Thirdly, case study analysis avoids the trap of quantitative studies which identify

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of the analysis, Asia and Oceania are considered as one geographical location.

<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of the analysis, Europe and the Caucasus are considered as one geographical location.

<sup>10</sup> The case study analysis includes the incidence of civil war in the United States of America (1861-1865). The reason why the American Civil War is included with the rest of the case studies is because this civil war fits the framework of the new war theory. This peculiarity is investigated further in the case study analysis.

questionable statistical correlations between variables such as poverty and outbreak of violent conflict for example. Nevertheless, this dissertation recognises the limitations of case study analysis. For example, the limited number of case studies means that the findings of the analysis are not generalisable and their absolute validity is debatable. Another limitation of case study analysis is the selection of cases and the objectivity of the researcher<sup>11</sup>.

**Table 1<sup>12</sup>:** Intrastate Wars – New Wars<sup>13</sup>

Conflict Name	Duration	Geographic Location
United States of America	1861 – 1865	Americas
Russia	1917 – 1921	Europe & Caucasus
Spain	1936 – 1939	Europe & Caucasus
Colombia	1949 – 1962	Americas
Sudan	1963 – 1972	Middle East
Angola	1975 – 2002	Africa
Cambodia	1975 – 1979	Asia & Oceania
Indonesia (East Timor)	1975 – 1998	Asia & Oceania
Afghanistan	1978 – ongoing	Middle East
Sri Lanka	1984 – 2009	Asia & Oceania
India (Kashmir)	1985 – ongoing	Asia & Oceania
Somalia	1981 - ongoing	Africa
Bosnia/Herzegovina	1992 – 1995	Europe & Caucasus
Liberia	1992 – 1995	Africa
Rwanda	1994 – 1994	Africa
Nepal	1996 – 2006	Asia & Oceania
Democratic Republic of Congo	1998 – ongoing	Africa
Russia (Chechnya)	1999 – 2009	Europe & Caucasus
Mexico	2006 – ongoing	Americas
Palestine	2006 – 2009	Middle East

<sup>11</sup> Arguably, researchers could influence the finding of their studies through selecting instrumental cases studies.

<sup>12</sup> The data for the case study analysis has been retrieved from the COW *Intra-State War Data, 1816-1997* (v.3.0) and the UCDP/PRIO *Armed Conflict Dataset, 1946-2008* (v.4-2009).

<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of the analysis, the intrastate wars shaded in blue exhibit the characteristics of new wars and fit in the analytical framework of the new wars debate.

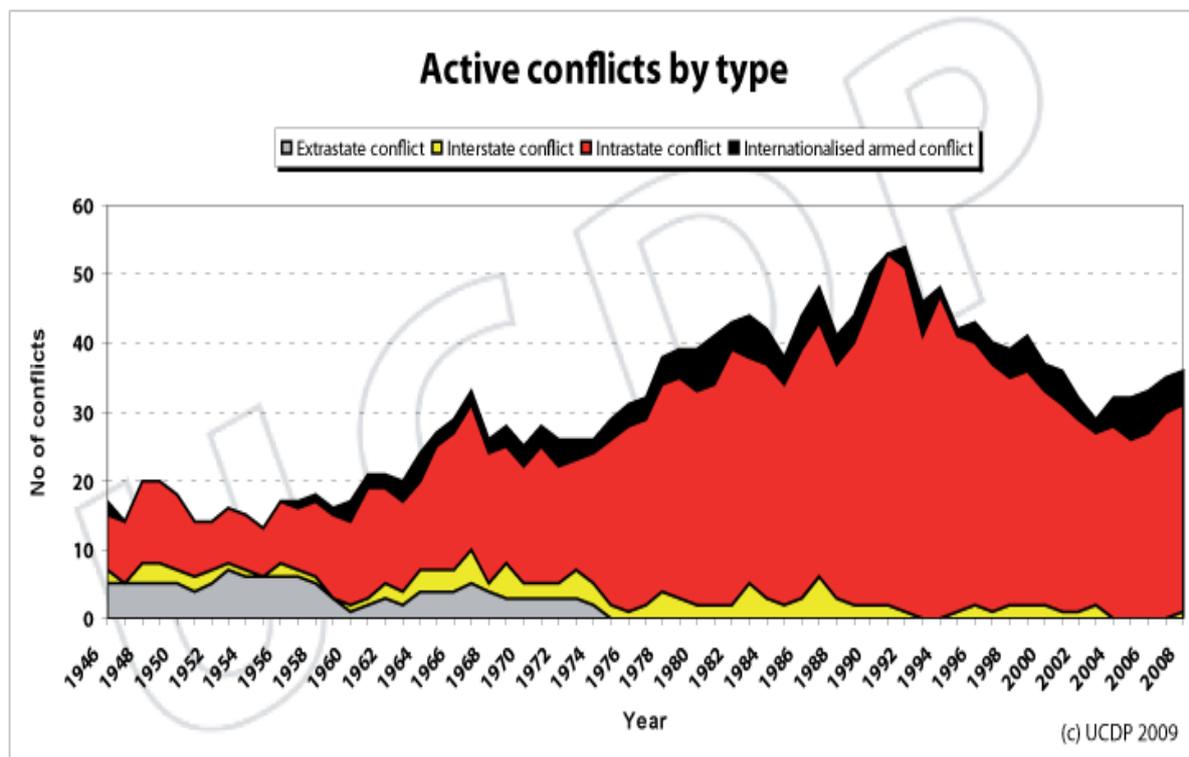
The central argument of the new war thesis is that “during the last decades of the twentieth century, a new type of organised violence has developed” (Kaldor 2006: 1). This type of violence has been branded “new war” (Kaldor 2006: 1). The brand “new” is used to differentiate contemporary wars from earlier wars. The argument holds that new wars are civil wars or internal wars, and they represent a definite departure from traditional intrastate wars.

The empirical analysis and the data from Table 1 show that one of the main weaknesses of the new war thesis is that it does not employ historical data in its analysis, and it does not apply its findings to earlier examples of civil war. Newman (2004: 179-180) argues that “all of the factors that characterise new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years” and the “presence or absence of certain factors is best explained by the peculiarities of specific conflicts rather than linear historical changes.” The cases of the American and the Spanish Civil War certainly confirm this argument. They problematise the novelty claim of the new wars theory and suggests that the novelty claim has to be re-examined in order to enhance the validity of the new war thesis..

In relation to the novelty claim, the new wars literature suggests that the number of interstate conflicts has declined, while the number of intrastate conflicts has increased (Hironaka 2005: 6). This claim is problematic because different scholars define and codify civil war in a different manner and therefore “different analyses may present different results on conflict trends” (Newman 2004: 180). For example, the UCDP (2009) graph *Active Conflicts by Type* refutes the claim that there has been a linear decrease in the number of interstate wars and an increase in the number of intrastate wars. The UCDP (2009) graph suggests that the quantitative instance of both interstate and intrastate wars has declined since 1992. Moreover,

the UCDP (2009) graph suggests that the number of all types of violent conflict has fluctuated significantly since the end of the Cold War, and these fluctuations do not fit a linear pattern.

**Figure 1:** Active Conflicts by Type (UCDP 2009)



Having discussed the historical relevance of the new war thesis, it is pertinent to investigate the reasons why some post-Cold War conflicts, such as Chechnya, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, do not fit in the new war framework. The fact that the new war thesis does not fully explain the causes and the driving forces of these five conflicts indicates that the new war thesis overlooks the nuances and specificity of individual incidents of civil war. This is a problem of the new war methodology and it need to be addressed.

Regardless of its lapses, the new war thesis continues to challenge the way scholars perceive and theorise about violent conflict. This dissertation argues that the utility of the new war theory lies in the innovative analysis that it offers, rather than the observation of the newness of contemporary conflict. Indeed, the innovative approach the new war thesis offers compelling analysis of the social and economic dynamics of civil war. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina – the “archetypal example” of modern conflict – the new war thesis offers fascinating insights into the causes of war, the impact of the globalised war economy, the typology, methods and aims of the warring parties, the methods of warfare, and the impact of civil war on humanity (Kaldor 2006: 33). Instead of reiterating the cliché of ethnic conflict and theorising about civil war as an “inexplicable Kalpanesque all-against-all conflict, rooted in old hatreds that could hardly [ever] be ameliorated,” we now think of the civil war in former Yugoslavia as a failure of the international community to provide effective local and international policing that could have restrained the “intimidating, opportunistic thugs” that were “successful mainly because they were the biggest bullies on the block” (Mueller 2000: 64-65).

In the cases of Afghanistan, Angola and Mexico the new war thesis provides an effective framework for analysing the role of the decline of the state, the rise of globalised war economy and the availability of natural resources in the development and duration of civil wars. The new war thesis suggests that countries, such as Afghanistan, Angola and Mexico, are characterised by poor governance, widespread corruption, failing economy, high unemployment and proximity to natural resources, which makes them more vulnerable to violent conflicts. Moreover, the “withdrawal of foreign sponsorship at the end of the Cold War” motivates belligerents, who find themselves in the zone of turmoil, to seek “alternative sources of revenue” (Le Billon 2005: 43). Indeed, in Afghanistan and Angola belligerents

profit from theft of oil and extraction of gems and diamonds. Similarly, in Mexico belligerents profit from drug trade and export. Thus the new war thesis provides some interesting insights into the consequences of the decline of the state, the growth of the globalised war economy and the exploitation of natural resources as means to sustaining the war effort in the zone of turmoil (Snow 1996: 11).

Furthermore, the new wars theory provides an improved understanding of the impact of violent conflict on humanity. In the cases of Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda, the new wars debate explains the process of victimisation of civilians and shows the detrimental effect that wars have on the individual, the family and the community. The civil wars in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda are characterised by the deliberate targeting of civilians, the violation of human rights, the use of rape as a tool of war, and the ethnic cleansing of whole groups of society. These patterns of victimization are appalling; however, they are not new. “Warfare in the 20<sup>th</sup> century did not move from an ethos of chivalry among uniformed soldiers to one of barbarity among warlords and militias” (Newman 2004: 184). The American and the Spanish Civil War were also very bloody and they were characterised with a high proportion of civilian casualties in proportion to the total number of casualties.

Considering the lapses of the new war thesis, this dissertation argues that the utility of the new war thesis is not in identifying accurate trends about the nature of violent conflict. The utility of the new war thesis is embedded in its capacity to compel scholars and policy makers to react to the reality of civil war and to change the way they address violent conflict. In this context, it is interesting to note that the new war thesis is constantly evolving and changing. The meaning of the term “new” is no longer solely associated with the novelty of the characteristics of the contemporary wars. In a recent interview, Kaldor has explained that she

has been using the term “new” in order to “draw attention to the need for new approaches in addressing contemporary conflicts” (Kaldor 2009). Therefore, testing the utility of the new wars thesis requires understanding the policy implications of the new war argument.

# Implications of the New Wars Debate

The new wars debate has significant implications for scholarship and policy because it improves the understanding of the dynamics of civil war and the social and economic variables of violent conflict. In terms of scholarship, the new wars debate has significant implications for the choice of methodology of conflict analysis studies, the use of historical narrative in conflict analysis, the provision of new insights into the security discourse, the incorporation of concepts such as “as socio-economic inequality, divided societies, human rights abuse, poverty, migration, economic disruptions, diaspora communities, and international commodity markets” (Newman 2004: 186), and the call for a development of a multidisciplinary approach to conflict analysis. In terms of policy, the new wars debate has significant implications for the shift of focus to unconventional security threats and belligerents, policy design, post-conflict peace building, strong international and local policing, international law, and poverty reduction. The implications of the new wars thesis are discussed in this chapter.

# Implications for Scholarship

The new wars debate has significant implications for scholarship. In terms of methodology, the new wars thesis provides a robust empirical framework for analysing the network of qualitative variables that shape contemporary violent conflict. Thus, the new wars thesis contributes to the field of conflict analysis by enhancing scholars' definition and understanding of the social, political and economic dynamics of civil war. However, the problem with the new wars methodology is that it identifies a debatable shift in the pattern of warfare. Robust historical research refutes the finding of the new wars thesis and suggests that the shifts in the nature of warfare are not linear and earlier forms of warfare have also exhibited the characteristics of modern warfare. Thus, scholars need to re-examine the methodology and the trends identified by the new wars thesis in order to improve its validity.

Another implication of the new wars debate is that it emphasises the utility of historical narrative for the study of international relations (Newman 2004: 186). Historical narrative does not always provide objective quantifiable data; however, it offers a fundamental viewpoint on the nature of conflict. The perceived lack of objectivity and quantification of historical material do not outweigh the benefits of employing historical narrative in conflict analysis. In fact, contemporary data from modern violent conflicts is not always verifiable or precise; however it is still incorporated in academic research. Furthermore, employing historical data is essential when arguing that there is an inherent change in the nature of warfare because historical data indicates that "new" wars are not significantly different from "old" wars (Newman 2004: 186). Overall, the use of historical narrative in the broad field of conflict analysis enhances the validity of a number of claims about the nature, the trends and the patterns of violent conflicts.

Furthermore, the new wars debate has broadened and deepened scholars' understanding of violent conflict. The new wars thesis has challenged the conventional conception of security and has provided new insights for the security discourse. Instead of focusing solely on weapons, military threats and national territory, the new wars literature has turned its attention to the social and economic aspects of civil war. Thus, a significant implication of the new wars debate is that scholars cannot afford to limit their research to the military dimension of war. They need to incorporate the political, societal, economic and environmental dimensions of war in their analysis (Shepherd & Weldes 2007: 531; Commission on Human Security 2003; Newman 2001; Bajpai 2000;). Therefore, scholars need to delve into eminent threats to human security such as extreme poverty, violation of human rights, infectious diseases, starvation, state oppression, violent crime, environmental disasters and loss of culture in order to enhance the quality of their research.

The new wars debate explores the relationship between civil wars and human insecurity. The research agenda of the new wars literature addresses issues such as “as socio-economic inequality, divided societies, human rights abuse, poverty, migration, economic disruptions, diaspora communities, and international commodity markets” (Newman 2004: 186). The complexity of these issues requires a multi-disciplinary approach to the analysis of contemporary civil wars. It is unfortunate that social scientists such as economists, psychologists and behavioural analysts have not become more involved in the process of conflict analysis. For example, even though economists have always been interested in trends of socio-economic inequality, poverty and international commodity markets, they have not channelled their research in the direction of conflict analysis. A multi-disciplinary approach

to conflict analysis could potentially increase the explanatory and predictive value of academic research.

Another very important implication of the new wars debate is the idea that scholars need to engage with the concept of horizontal inequalities. Since civil wars usually involve the conflict of one social group against another, it is necessary to look for explanations of conflict in the differences between the conflicting social groups, i.e. it is necessary to study the horizontal inequalities between different groups. Unlike vertical inequalities, differences between individuals, horizontal inequalities allow scholars to gain insights into the nature and dimensions of conflict (Stewart 2000: 245). In practice, the majority of states do not produce statistics of horizontal inequality because they are more interested in vertical inequality or because they do not want to publish information on horizontal inequalities as it might cause social disturbances. Nevertheless, it is imperative for scholars to collect data on horizontal inequalities because this is “essential for identification of potential problems and possible solutions” (Stewart 2000: 255; cf. Østby 2008).

# Implications for Policy

There is little doubt that understanding the nature and dynamics of civil war is essential for policy analysis, as well as for the prediction, prevention and resolution of armed conflict. This dissertation argues that academic research needs to relate to international policymakers and practitioners from the security, intervention and legal fields. Tackling modern security problems such as terrorism, the disturbances in Haiti, and the civil wars in Afghanistan, Chad, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo requires developing in-depth knowledge of the nature of violent conflict and constructing strategies for political reform, economic stability and poverty reduction.

In terms of understanding the nature of civil wars, the new war literature shows policy makers that contemporary warfare “does not resemble a Hobbesian state of nature” (Mueller 2000: 62). Even though the reports from contemporary civil wars in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sudan and Guatemala evoke images of war of all against all; what happens in war torn societies is not the product of murderous hatreds or ethnic enmity (Keen 2000: 6). The new wars literature suggests that what happens in war torn societies is often dictated by corrupt governments, power-hungry warlords, armed thugs or violent paramilitary groups. It also suggests that religion and ethnicity are essentially used as an ordering principle in organised violence. The political identity of the perpetrators and victims of civil wars is not the key reason for the escalation of violence. Mueller (2000: 62) argues that political identity proves “to be simply the characteristic around which the perpetrators and the politicians who recruited and encouraged them happened to array themselves.” Thus, one of the significant implications of the new wars thesis is to improve policy analysis and to instigate policy

makers to think about civil wars in terms of greed rather than grievances (Berdal & Malone 2000; Collier & Hoeffler 2004). Recognising that civil wars are not a product of centuries of ethnic hatred allows policy makers to construct effective strategies for conflict prevention and resolution.

The enhanced understanding of contemporary violent conflicts provided by the new war debate has significant implications for peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In the beginning of the twenty-first century<sup>14</sup>, the international community formed the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty and coined the term “Responsibility to Protect” – a manifestation of the realisation that the “security of the community and the individual, not only the state, must be priorities for national and international policies” (ICRtoP 2010). Thus, the international community committed to strengthen its capability to tackle the victimisation of civilians – an increasingly more popular trademark of contemporary violent conflicts. Moreover, the new war thesis improved the understanding of the role of women in civil wars. In 2000, the UN Resolution 1325 officially acknowledged the fact that since women bear the front of violent conflict, they should have a more prominent role in conflict prevention and resolution. Since the adoption of Resolution 1325, Liberia has elected the first female president in African history and welcomed the first all-female peacekeeping unit from India (Ragy 2008).

Another implication of the proliferation of the new war thesis is that policy makers should aim to make violent conflict less profitable<sup>15</sup> (Cilliers & Mason 1999; Collier 2000). The new war literature shows that gaining financial power is an increasingly prominent and notorious

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<sup>14</sup> The shift in the security discourse in the beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by the fact that the international community recognised its failure to prevent the genocides in Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda and the crimes against humanity in Darfur, East Timor and Kosovo (ICRtoP 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Please see Appendix 3 for more information on the profitability of violent conflicts.

objective of combatants involved in contemporary violent conflicts. Arguably, the end of the Cold War and the victory of capitalism over communism have elevated economic self interest to “a position of ideological hegemony” and have created “a fertile climate for the world’s most genuinely aggressive entrepreneurs” (Keen 2000: 4). The civil wars in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo are quintessential examples of the importance of economic incentives in contemporary conflicts. In Sierra Leone, “the diamond economy has mutated into ... conflict” – the official government forces have become involved in illegal diamond trade by dressing as insurgents, acting as insurgents, selling weapons to insurgents and coordinating the collection of diamonds alongside with insurgents in order to maximise their gains (Keen 2000: 4). Thus, reducing the opportunities for looting and the profitability of war can discourage belligerents and damage the war economy. Moreover, it is important that international policy makers become aware of this phenomenon of modern warfare and start “freezing the bank accounts and seizing the assets of those suspected of involvement” in violent conflict (Rupesinghe & Anderlini 1998: 140).

A further implication of the new war debate is the requirement for understanding the behaviour, objectives and tools of violence of unconventional belligerents in order to prevent the escalation of violence and the victimization of civilians. Policy analysis often lacks a clear focus on non-state actors, paramilitary and rebel groups because most of the international community have a bias towards legitimate actors and national armies (Jones & Cater 2001: 238). The new war thesis suggests that the weakening of the state and the decline of legitimate authority gives rise to a wide range of unconventional actors in civil wars. It is important for policy makers to “draw a number of analytic distinctions that establish a rough typology of the highly diverse types of militias” (Jones & Cater 2001: 238). Such typology

will enhance policy analysis and will provide the base for the development of effective policies that restrict the formation of militias and prevent armed conflict.

Another implication of the new wars debate is an improved understanding of the tools and methods of violence employed by rebel groups. The new wars debate instigates practitioners in the fields of security and humanitarian intervention to think about civil wars in terms of guerrilla wars or insurgencies (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75). A number of scholars have suggested that insurgency tactics are viable and often successful in violent conflicts due to inconsistent counterinsurgency practices and lack of local and international policing (Mueller 2000: 63; Fearon & Laitin 2003: 76). Therefore, the implication of the new war thesis is that policy makers should develop counterinsurgency practices and should invest in strong local and international policing. Data from contemporary civil wars demonstrates how strong international policing forces have suppressed the violent conflicts in Haiti in the middle of the 1990s and in East Timor in 1999. The data from Rwanda from 1993-1994 shows that the failure of the global community to contribute well armed well trained and well disciplined forces exasperated the massacres and the violence exerted during the civil war. Therefore, the experience from modern armed conflicts implies that the presence of a strong local and international policing force could prevent the eruption of thug-dominated conflicts.

Another implication of the new war thesis associated with the need for strong international policing is the need for reform of “the state-centric framework within which ... countries and international organisations, especially the UN and its agencies, necessarily operate” (Berdal & Malone 2000: 10). The state-centric framework has not inhibited the international community from engaging in civil conflicts around the world; however, it has limited the degree of efficacy of the intervention operations. The real problem of the state-centric

framework is that it hinders the analysis of the complex environment of contemporary civil wars and it fails to address phenomena such as shadow states, loss of state monopoly over the means of violence, criminalisation of the state, warlordism and the rise of violent paramilitary groups. As long as the international community employs the narrow state-centric approach and keeps its bias towards intervention in terms of formal state sovereignty, intervention in war-situations can prove to be ineffective and futile (Berdal & Malone 2000: 10). The UN intervention operations in Somalia and Rwanda provide empirical evidence of the limitations of the state-centric framework. The narrow focus of the UN and its agencies on the “formal state structures” and the failure to recognise the realities of “factual sovereignty” have significant implications that need to be explored further (Berdal & Malone 2000: 10).

Newman (2004: 187) argues that “the legalist model of international politics – premised upon sovereign autonomy, control of territory, sovereign equality, and non-interference – seems to be demonstrably out of touch with reality in a number of respects.” The new war literature and the reality of contemporary civil wars shows sovereignty is not an absolute principle and the divergence of empirical and juridical sovereignty grows in the environment of shadow states and violent conflicts (Newman 2004: 187; Krasner 1999; Malone & Berdal 2000). An important implication of the new wars thesis is that it instigates a political debate about concepts such as equal rights to legal respect, unfringeable territorial integrity and sovereign responsibility. Such debate can no longer be avoided by the international community if they want to tackle problems such as human rights violation, forced human displacement, illegal transborder activity and loss of state authority.

A number of the implications of the new wars debate have a normative character. The implications that were discussed in this chapter so far are associated with policies that can

employed by practitioners in the legal, security and intervention fields in order to tackle and resolve civil wars. The next set of implications is associated with prevention of the onset of violent conflicts.

A number of scholars and international organisations engage with the new wars debate and study its implications for conflict prediction and prevention. In recent years, scholars have identified the inherent connection between security and economic, social and political development. The international institutions have embraced the academic research, and the UN, the World Bank, the G8, the European Union and the United States Institute for Peace have put prevention of violent conflict, eradication of poverty, health care and ecological balance on the top of their policy agendas. For example, the UN has advanced its Millennium Development Goals<sup>16</sup> and has pledged to “end poverty” by 2015 (UN Millennium Developmental Goals 2009). This is extremely important because poor people unambiguously relate poverty to security and security to personal safety. Indeed, poor people compare security threats to starvation, lack of clean drinking water, lack of medical care and violation of human rights (Department for International Development (DFID) 2005: 5). Interestingly, all these characteristics of human insecurity have been featured in war torn states such as Burundi, Afghanistan, Congo, Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia to name a few. The strong influence of the new war thesis has permeated through the UN policy agenda. Thus, through the Millennium Development Goals framework (2009), the UN promises to work towards ending poverty and hunger, providing universal education and gender equality, caring for child and maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, and striving for environmental sustainability and global partnership. The specific goals outlined by the UN show how the new wars debate has impacted on policy. The new wars debate shifts the focus from national

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 4 for more information on the Millennium Developmental Goals

security to human security and shows that upgrading the security of the nation state is very different from upgrading the security of poor civilians. Indeed, policy analysis suggests that increased security for the state can lead to greater insecurities for the civilians especially in cases of corrupt national governments and dictatorship regimes. The DFID emphasises that poor civilians live in fear of neglect, exploitation and assault “often at the hands of precisely those institutions that are meant to protect them” (DFID 2005: 5). Therefore, the UN is taking a step in the right direction by focusing its policies on promoting human security.

# Conclusion

Over the last decade, a number of scholars have challenged the conventional understanding of armed conflict and civil war in particular by arguing that the nature of contemporary wars is qualitatively different from the nature of earlier wars. This argument developed into the new wars thesis, which has been explored in this dissertation. The central argument of the new wars thesis is that after the end of the Cold War a new pattern of violence has developed and new wars can be distinguished from old wars in terms of the spatial context, role of the state, actors, methods, motives, objectives and victims. This dissertation argued that the shift in the nature of warfare is more apparent than real because the change in the way scholars analyse and theorise about war is considerably bigger than the change in the reality of wars. The juxtaposition of the new war thesis with historical evidence enhances the validity of this argument.

Nevertheless, this dissertation suggested that the analysis of contemporary conflict provided by the new wars literature is very interesting, innovative and useful. It has enhanced scholars and politicians' understanding of the dynamics of war and the social and economic aspect of civil war in particular. Moreover, this dissertation has argued that the new wars debate has a wide range of implications for academics and policy. These implications need to be addressed in order to predict, prevent and resolve violent conflicts more efficiently on a local and global level.

Finally, this dissertation acknowledges the importance of plurality and diversity of contesting theories about war. Indeed, it would be interesting to see what the future holds for the field of conflict analysis and the relative novelty of new wars. The hopeful prediction is that war in

the future might become a symbolical archaism, like slavery and colonialism for example. Kant's concept of "perpetual peace"<sup>17</sup> – the progress to international governance and all-encompassing civility – might become real possibilities for tomorrow (Kaldor 2006: 193). The cynical prediction is that humanity will soon face the "coming anarchy" – the global environment of broken civil order (Kaldor 2006: 186). The erosion of legitimate state authority, the loss of control over the monopoly of violence, the growing incapacity of international organisations and the increasing power of brutal paramilitary groups and terrorists might lead to more violent, destructive and uncontrollable wars in the future. Kaldor (2006: 194) argues that "we cannot assume that either barbarism or civility is embedded in human nature." This dissertation suggests that future is at our own hands – the hands of academics, the hands of practitioners in the field of politics, diplomacy and security, but most of all the hands of ordinary people who can choose to work towards a peaceful global community or a long-term wide-spread violence.

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<sup>17</sup> Perpetual Peace is a concept proposed by Immanuel Kant in an essay published in 1795.

# Appendix 1

New wars erupt in a context of globalisation, state failure and privatisation of violence. Sustaining economic activities - such as production, taxation, trade and consumption - is extremely difficult in a volatile environment of war<sup>18</sup>. During war governments are often forced to withdraw their support for industries and businesses. As a result, production grinds to a halt and governments cannot raise revenues through the tax system. Instead, they have to rely on funding from foreign governments, NGOs and humanitarian aid (Kaldor 2006: 111).

Nevertheless, in some resource rich countries, such as Angola, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Colombia, the production of diamonds, minerals, oil and drugs is maintained and the profits sustain the war efforts of belligerents (Le Billon 2005: 36). Moreover, funds transfers from abroad and aid from the diaspora assist paramilitary groups by providing arms and money. Indeed, Irish Americans have funded IRA activities, as well as Croatian migrants from Canada, Austria and Germany have funded the Croatian Party (Kaldor 2006: 109). Humanitarian assistance also finances paramilitary groups through custom duties or war taxes. For example, Bosnian Croats required twenty-seven per cent tax on humanitarian aid transferred through the region Herzeg-Bosne, which was “the only way to reach certain areas in Central Bosnia” (Kaldor 2006: 110). However, when the strategy of war tax fails, belligerents resort to raid and robbery tactics. Attacks on humanitarian workers have been a common occurrence in war torn states such as Angola, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia and Rwanda. The black market is another key element of the war economy. Since unemployment, inflation and devaluation of money are an epitome of a failed state at war, ordinary people and armed groups fall back on “asset transfers” or barter deals, performed on the black market, in order

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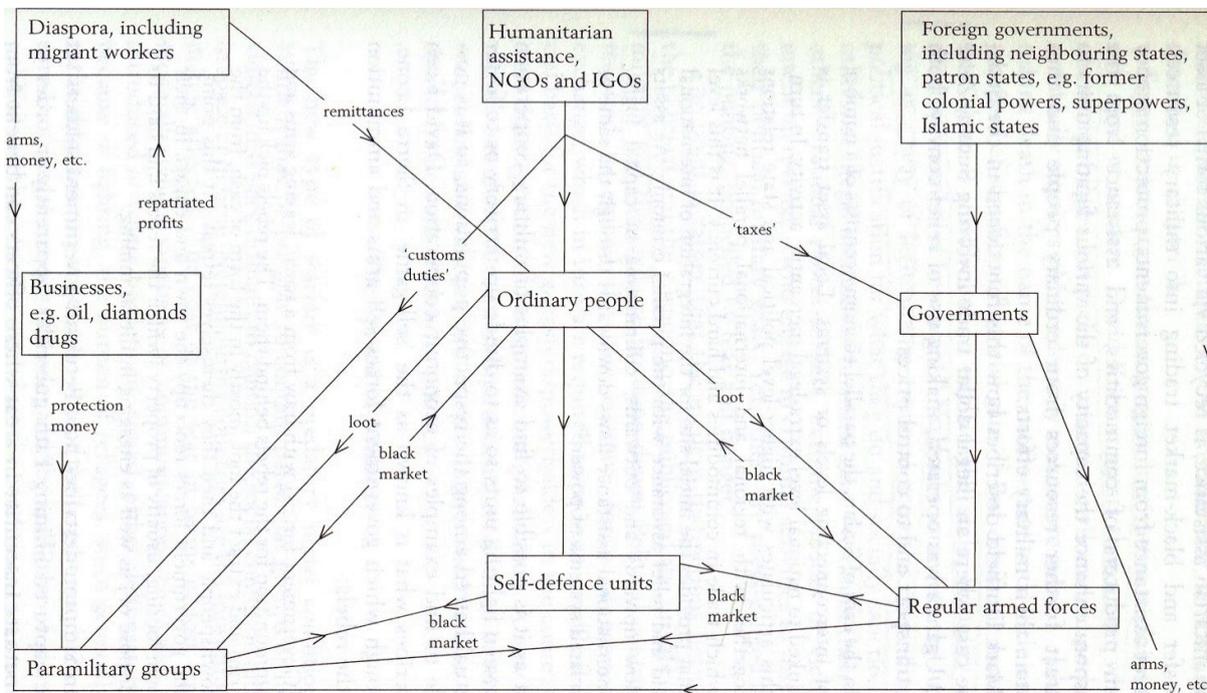
<sup>18</sup> Earlier forms of warfare or Clausewitzian wars have been financed through “increased taxation and the mobilization of a centralized self-sufficient war economy” (Kaldor 2009).

to provide a wide range of commodities such as essentials for survival or weapons (Duffield 1994: 53). The black market in Sudan sustained the war economy and facilitated the trade of food, arms, prisoners of war and even dead bodies.

Another source of finance in a war economy is looting. “Loot, robbery, extortion, pillage and hostage taking” are among the simplest and most popular forms of raising finance in contemporary violent conflict (Kaldor 2006: 108). In Rwanda, for example, rich people were killed and their valuables were robbed and redistributed among belligerents who needed resources to fund their military operations.

Scholars and policy makers should explore the convoluted flow of resources in contemporary violent conflict in order to prevent the development of black markets and networks of robbery and plunder. Moreover, understanding the driving forces between the globalised war economy could help policy makers to tackle violent conflict in a more effective way.

**Figure 2** illustrates the flow of resources in new wars (Kaldor 2006: 111).



## Appendix 2

According to the best estimate of the *UCDP Non-State Conflict Dataset* (Version 2.1-2009), the death toll of violent conflicts from 2002 to 2007 exceeds 101 thousand.

According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report* (2009: 8), the number of internally displaced persons has risen by 1 million from 2002 to 2007 and has reached 26 millions in 2007.

According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report* (2009: 8), the number of refugees has increased by 1.8 million from 2002 to 2007 and has reached 16 million in 2007.

Therefore, the number of “victims” of violent conflict from 2002 to 2007 exceeds 42 million.

The number of victims of violent conflict from 2002 to 2007 is greater than the number of people living in Sudan, the country with the 29<sup>th</sup> biggest population in the world (CIA World Factbook 2009).

This information is deeply concerning and has to be addressed by scholars and policy makers.

**Figure 3:** Map of Africa: Sudan (CIA World Factbook 2010).



## Appendix 3

Appendix 2 explains how belligerents profit from the globalised war economy through theft, establishments of black markets, exploitation of natural resources, and collection of war taxes.

Appendix 3 concentrates on the profitability of natural resources acquired by belligerents in armed conflicts. One example of how profits from natural resources can “influence the course of an armed conflict” is fleshed out by the comparison between Angola and Mozambique (Le Billon 2005: 43). In resource-rich Angola, UNITA yields an estimate of \$500 million from diamonds and oil extraction, which helps the rebel group to sustain the war effort and to break the fragile peace twice (Le Billon: 2005: 31, 43). In comparison, RENAMO, the rebel movement in resource-poor Mozambique, struggled to finance its violent activities and “adhered to the peace process in the early 1990s” (Le Billon 2005: 43). This suggests that resource-rich countries foster a more favourable environment for conflict eruption because potential belligerents could be motivated by greed and opportunism. In order to avoid the outbreak of violent conflict, policy makers should aim to reduce the profitability of civil wars. The following table shows just how profitable violent conflicts are.

**Table 2:** Profitability of violent conflict (Le Billon 2005: 30)

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Price Range (\$/kg)</b>
Alluvial Gems and Minerals	20,000 – 500,000
Timber	0.1
Agricultural Commodities	1.5 (Coffee)
Onshore Oil	0.12
Kimberlite Diamonds	500,000
Deep-Shaft Minerals	2 (Copper)
Offshore Oil	0.12

# Appendix 4

## United Nations: Millennium Development Goals



### Extract from

### *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*<sup>19</sup>

### Foreword

Nine years ago, world leaders set far-sighted goals to free a major portion of humanity from the shackles of extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease. They established targets for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development. In short, they adopted a blueprint for a better world – and pledged to spare no effort in fulfilling that vision.

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<sup>19</sup> The full *Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* is available online at: Available at: [http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG\\_Report\\_2009\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_Report_2009_ENG.pdf)

We have made important progress in this effort, and have many successes on which to build. But we have been moving too slowly to meet our goals. And today, we face a global economic crisis whose full repercussions have yet to be felt. At the very least, it will throw us off course in a number of key areas, particularly in the developing countries. At worst, it could prevent us from keeping our promises, plunging millions more into poverty and posing a risk of social and political unrest. That is an outcome we must avoid at all costs.

We cannot allow an unfavorable economic climate to undermine the commitments made in 2000. On the contrary, our efforts to restore economic growth should be seen as an opportunity to take some of the hard decisions needed to create a more equitable and sustainable future.

This report shows that the right policies and actions, backed by adequate funding and strong political commitment, can yield results. Fewer people today are dying of AIDS, and many countries are implementing proven strategies to combat malaria and measles, two major killers of children. The world is edging closer to universal primary education, and we are well on our way to meeting the target for safe drinking water.

However, the report also notes that many challenges remain and are likely to become even more difficult in the current economic climate. Early indications are that, not surprisingly, the poor have suffered most from the upheaval of the past year. The numbers of people going hungry and living in extreme poverty are much larger than they would have been had progress continued uninterrupted. Economic hardship has

pushed tens of millions of people into vulnerable employment and increased the number of those who, though employed, do not earn enough for themselves and their families to rise above the poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

Rather than retreat, now is the time to accelerate progress towards the MDGs and to strengthen the global partnership for development. If the global community responds constructively to the crisis, the goals can still be achieved. Honouring the commitment to increase aid is critical. Equally important is ensuring that the interests of the developing countries, and especially the poorest ones, remain central in negotiations on trade. We must also 'seal the deal' on a new climate change regime in Copenhagen in December. The timing is ripe for making the structural changes that are needed to move more decisively towards more equitable development and sustainability and to address the climate crisis.

The global community cannot turn its back on the poor and the vulnerable. We must strengthen global cooperation and solidarity, and redouble our efforts to reach the MDGs and advance the broader development agenda. Nothing less than the viability of our planet and the future of humanity are at stake. I urge policymakers and all stakeholders to heed the message of this valuable and timely report.

Ban Ki-moon

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ki Moon Ban', written in a cursive style.

*Secretary-General, United Nations*

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